



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

### Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

### About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

NYPL RESEARCH LIBRARIES



3 3433 07487939 0



NCW

Keddie, H.



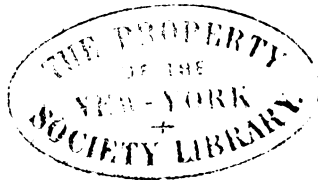




# HONOR ORMTHWAITE

A Novel

BY THE AUTHOR OF  
"LADY JEAN'S VAGARIES"



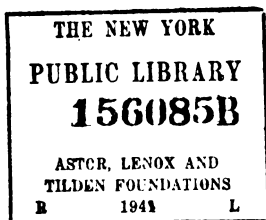
NEW YORK

HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS

1896

50





Copyright, 1896, by HARPER & BROTHERS.

*All rights reserved.*

**HONOR ORMTHWAITE**

—

—

## HONOR ORMTHWAITE

---

### I

THE Clays' cottage was one of the poorest and smallest of the tumble-down cottages in the agricultural village of Hayes in the Wolds. Sodden and poverty stricken as the house looked, possessing no greater accommodation than a back and front kitchen and a garret sleeping-room above them, its forlornness was increased by the fact that it had been stripped of furniture this very morning in order to pay the rent. Why Job Clay locked the door behind him when he quitted the house it would be hard to say, unless the act had the origin of many of our acts—habit.

A couple stood for a moment with their backs to the locked door. The pair were very young, a mere boy and girl, though the girl carried a baby, wrapped up in a shepherd's plaid shawl, yellow with age and mangy in the fringe. The girl wore a calico gown, threadbare black cloth jacket, and shabby straw hat. The man was in moleskins, with a still shabbier and more battered straw hat. The whole dress

of the two indicated roughly that they had not two spare pennies between them. The girl was the tidier, the one who clung fiercely to a standard of respectability. Her frock was clean, though it showed patches and darns, her jacket and hat were put on carefully. The lad's moleskins were soiled and frayed, his heavy, uncouth boots had not been cleaned for days, his rag of a necktie was half loose, while it crumpled into his thin, sunburnt neck, the one creditable portion of his shirt collar.

He was not more than nineteen, she was barely seventeen; yet they represented two juvenile parents, the responsible heads of a house broken up within the last twelve hours. Such examples of the burdens of manhood and womanhood appropriated before their time, in spite of the protests of clergymen and the remonstrances of magistrates and political economists, are not unheard of in England.

One member of the precocious couple was prepared to throw down her burden; she had got enough of it—all the more so, that her companion in imprudence had betrayed every inclination to transfer his half of the load to her already over-weighted shoulders.

The pair—looking at each other, sullenly and doggedly on the girl's side, and on the lad's part half slinkingly, half shyly, with a few grains of feeble remorse and regret shot from beneath the flickering lids and flaxen lashes—presented two altogether different types of face. The girl's, pear-shaped, spare, and with the skin blanched and



parched by poor living and recent illness, was cleanly cut in every feature. The dark eyes were well opened, if a little stony in their stare. The colorless mouth was firm to severity. The chin was not one of those chins which it is a fashion of the day to admire—those square chins which tell of self-indulgence and love of good eating, quite as much as of strong and steadfast will. This girl's chin was peaked—neither a long peak, nor a short peak, but a well-defined peak, which showed the lower half of the face in entire proportion to the general contour. It reminded the gazer that with fair chances and fitting nourishment the chin should have rounded off the excellent oval of the whole, and matched with the fine curves of the throat and neck. As it was, the cheeks were hollow, the lips pinched, the eyes haggard, the throat and neck emaciated to skin and bone. The very breast was shrunken and fallen in, and the shoulders bent, so that the original height, tall for a girl, was lost. The complexion had been in harmony with the dark hair—still sufficiently abundant to indicate what its earlier luxuriance must have been—the warm olive of a brunette. Now it hovered between sallowness and grayness—the last tint not without the lingering shadow of premature death in its chillness.

The lad had also manifestly undergone a prolonged process of starvation. But there were other traces in the face and figure for which want did not account. Figure and face had been loosely knit and indistinctly moulded at the best. The legs

were too long, the short body was narrow, with tapering shoulders. The full lips hung slightly open, and encroached on a palpably weak chin. The blunt nose ran into a forehead, broad, high, and curiously white where it lay in the shadow of the brim of the tattered straw hat, This forehead was singularly vacant and destitute of landmark, from the lightness of the eyebrows. The beard was also light, while it was still in its downy stage, and was as straggling as it was downy. As a contrast to the negativeness of the other features, the pale blue eyes were prominent.

The signs which did not belong by right to a shallow, nebulous, easily influenced nature, or to protracted privation, were a certain lurch and trail of the gait, conspicuous when the lad had sojourned for any length of time at the ale-house, eventually lingering about him even when he was as sober as a judge, a flabbiness of the flesh, a blue tinge in the color of the hanging lips, a reddening of the dimpled tip of the nose, the bloodshot white of the prominent eyes. Any personal attractions which Job Clay had boasted before he tarried over the ale-mug and the gin-glass must have centred in a certain lightness and liveness of limb, a fair freshness, even delicacy in coloring, a good-natured, unthinking gayety of expression which had absolutely vanished. Still, it was just conceivable that he might have been a pretty pink-and-white baby, a not uncomely child, with white teeth and flaxen curls, even a somewhat pleasant, nicish-looking weakling, before his degradation began.

Why the two who had come to grief were alone—for the baby did not count—at the climax of their domestic misfortunes, calls for an explanation, since the friendly sociability and charitable good-fellowship of the working class are well known; equally so is their habit of flocking, invited or uninvited, undeterred by scruples of delicacy or caution, to be in at the death—that is, the disastrous ending of a neighbor's affairs. Honor Clay, Job Clay's wife, had owned relations in a tolerably prosperous way of doing, the father being the village wheelwright, and the mother holding a permanent engagement to do two days' servants' washing a-week at Hayes Hall, where she had formerly been a kitchen-maid. These circumstances had lasted up to the time of Honor's marriage, which had been against the will and judgment of her parents. Then Honor's mother had caught a chill and an inflammation, and died in the course of a week. Her husband, unable to work at his trade and at the same time to look after the younger children, had been allured by a childless sister, who had married a joiner in a large town several counties off, to unite forces both in the house and in the workshop. The consequence was that all Honor's near relations were swept away from her at a stroke, since the distance of three counties signified a remoteness as great as that of Constantinople or St. Petersburg to a young woman in her line of life.

Job Clay's kindred were on a decidedly lower level, both morally and socially, and they had no



sooner become Honor's kindred also than she had engaged in a bitter feud with them. She had given them so emphatically what she and they termed "a bit of her mind" and "the back of her door," that, however much they might pity Job, they were not likely to go near Job's wife in her tribulation.

As for the neighbors, Honor had deliberately chosen the early afternoon hour for abandoning the empty house. Then the men were still at work. Then the children had eaten their dinner, and gone back to school. Then the women were engaged in "washing up" and tidying their houses, previous to starting in gossiping bands, each gossip carrying a baby as far as the village allotments, there to study the interesting question of whose potatoes were most flourishing, or whose beans were coming earliest into blossom. Honor argued there had been enough exposure of deplorable conditions when the furniture was seized; she desired no witnesses to the parting between her and Job Clay. She had found herself entirely incapable of managing Job as she had meant to do during her single year of married life; still, hers was the stronger spirit of the two to decide the time and manner of their leave-taking.

Husband and wife stood looking at each other for a minute in silence, which Job broke hesitatingly and awkwardly—

"Well, wench, ye be goin' o' your own free will."

"What else ha' I left to do?" cried Honor, angrily. "Bite and sup were scarce enough afore, and now there ain't a chair to sit on, or a bed to lie

on. Do you mean me to hunker on the floor, like the gypsy women? Am I to fit mysen into an empty house as a dog smuggles into its kennel? The bairn's very cradle gone!"

"Nay, now, Honor," remonstrated the man, glad to get the opportunity of contradicting her and saying a word in his own defence, "Simmons would ha' spared ye that, if ye had kep' your temper and spoke him fair. And there's t'Owd Lamb, where my uncle would take you and the bairn in, for my sake, till ye—till us could look about."

"Niver, Job Clay, niver!" cried Honor, furiously. "I ha' not been used to take charity. As to going to that hole where ye ha' drunk away your wits and sold your soul—for your sake, I'd sooner tramp the roads till I dropped. I'd a deal rather lie down and die of cold and hunger in the fields."

"Then ye mun take your way, for ye winna be hindered, and if ye mun pay the piper, the reckonin' is yourn." His brow darkened; but the next instant there was the recoil from the irreparable, the clutch at a straw of reprieve, which was likely to happen with a man of his temperament. "If ye mun go, Honor, without telling me where to, and me not standin' in your way, or contradictin' ye, though ye are my wife—"

"Ye ha' no right," she interrupted him again indignantly. "If ye had worked for me as other men work for their wives; if ye had not been a lazy, heartless ne'er-do-well, who forsook me when I were swimmin' for my life, and sat boozin' in your precious uncle's public among other little-worth

scamps, soakin' the sma' brains you ha' been gifted wi', and spendin' the money as should ha' bought me medicine and nursin' and a sup to keep in my miserable life, ye might ha' had a title to dictate to me what I should do."

He winced perceptibly at her fiery words, but not sufficiently to signify that they were a novelty. Clearly custom had deadened their blistering power, therefore he still clung to his straw.

"Leastways, Honor, we'll part friends, after what ha' been atween us, and seein' we cannot tell what lies afore us."

"An' ye will," she said, scornfully; "but mind, it ain't because of any love I bear ye now. Whatever kindness I might ha' for ye in the past were killed stone-dead nine or ten months ago. It is because I would not be at the pains to quarrel wi' the likes of a mean-spirited, white-livered hound. And as to what lies afore us, I hope never to see your silly, false face again, Job Clay. It was the blackest day as ever befell me when you, a cat-witted bairn, were put in my charge for our plays, and me a wee lispin' thing not half your size."

He shrugged his narrow shoulders with a quickly passing gesture; a faint color came into the sickly, waxen white of his flaccid face. Nevertheless, he did not let go the last fragment of his straw.

"Let me see the chile. She is my chile as well as yourn," he said with more assurance, and with a touch of his lost manliness. He moved a step nearer to her and put a limp, nerveless, working-man's hand on the shepherd's-plaid shawl. "If I

may not kiss good-bye to my wife, I'll ha' a kiss o' my chile. I'm her father, as ye winna deny, and it's my due, and no more than is nat'ral."

She tore the shawl and the burden it contained from his loose grasp.

"Then that's just what ye sha'n't ha'," she told him, in white wrath, "father or no father, nat'ral or oonnat'ral. If ye had made a place for the bairn as ye were bund to make; if ye had done a hand's-turn for it, in place o' throwin' it on me, and me younger than you by a couple o' year, to drag me down into the dirt where ye ha' sunk up to the neck, ye might ha' gone through the farce o' cud-dlin' and kissin' it; but now ye sha'n't put a finger on the bairn, an' that is the last word I ha' to say to ye, Job Clay." With that she turned her back, and started down the vacant village street, in an approach to a run, with a spasmodic speed which she had not the strength to keep up.

He did not attempt to follow her. He gave another protesting shrug to his shoulders; again a tinge of red wavered across his pale face. He took off his hat, and wiped his face with his screwed-up blue cotton ball of a handkerchief, as if oppressed with heat, though the afternoon was cool. A scowl flitted across the blank expanse of his forehead, wrinkling it up for a few seconds.

"The ill-tongued young jade," he muttered, "the oonfeelin' vixen! Aye, that's what ha' druv me from workin' and sittin' still in the house wi' she. A man mun ha' peace and quiet if he cannot ha' company."

He thrust his hands into the tattered pockets which Honor had refused to mend for him, and lounged back, after the fashion of the dog and the sow, to the gratification of his base appetites in the noisy public-house. He would no longer be so welcome there, though he was kin to the rowdy landlord and landlady. He had ceased to own an accusing young randy whom these worthies could have the satisfaction of "spiting." He would furnish no more entertainment to the ale-house circle by his tales of her nagging tyranny and the niggardliness which could grudge him a drop of beer or gin. Why, he was allowed to score that up and no settlement of the account asked, unless in the singular event of his getting an odd job of work thrust into his hands, and being paid for it. His earnings were always precarious, being those of an odd man on a farm, or a jobbing gardener when no better could be found.

As it happened, Honor had spoken the absolute truth to Job Clay without knowing it. She had said her last word to him. Husband and wife were to see each other's face never more on this side of time.

## II

HONOR CLAY'S feet might stumble, and her breath come in fluttering gasps, but her determination never slackened. She trudged painfully along the straggling street and out into a country lane, where she was free from inquisitive eyes, glistening with pity or glittering with censure. Pity and censure were alike repugnant to her in her high-strung pride and defiance. She crouched down behind some pollard willows, where even the roving eye of a stray wayfarer could hardly detect her, for the brief rest which was absolutely needful for her if she was to go farther. She took the opportunity of feeding the child—a puny, fretful little creature, as might have been expected under the circumstances. Nature's springs were dried up in Honor. She had no nourishment for the child in her shrunken breast. She had to feed it from the bottle of milk with which she had supplied herself. Perhaps that was one reason why all a mother's instincts lay dormant in her. She could only look on the infant as Job Clay's child, though she had inconsistently denied his right in it, after he had with cruel injustice—from which the very law, not renowned for its tender mercies, would have protected her—thrown it upon her, to be an almost

intolerable drag on her, a heavy hinderance to her making her way in the world, and providing for herself decently.

Yet it never for a second crossed Honor's mind, distempered as it was, not to do the best she could for the child. To have laid violent hands upon it, to have abandoned it to cold and hunger, or to have cast it down at a stranger's door on the mere chance of its being taken in, probably only to be sent off to the workhouse and reared a little pauper, without the necessity of marring Honor's already clouded career, was as far from her thought as from that of the most loving mother in the country. She fed the child carefully, and wrapped it up methodically against the chill of coming rain in the wind, though she did not hug it in the sheer delight of possession, or gather it to her breast with the fondness of a miser hovering over and clasping his treasure. She was still very young, and she had no girlish passion for babies. The hard unripeness of a nature slow to develop its sweeter, more generous and gentle qualities, had been arrested and accentuated by her early unhappy marriage. The chances were against her ever ripening, softening, and mellowing in the unpropitious destiny which was all that could be expected for her, which was all that she expected for herself.

Honor took up the child again, groaning under the irksome fatigue of carrying it, and yet holding it as well as she knew how, in the manner in which it would have the most comfort, in which its wailing whimper would sink soonest into the silence of

sleep, and where it would be most effectually screened from a sudden shower. She had a clear purpose in her mind of what she was going to do, though she had not chosen to impart it to her husband. If her ability to walk would hold out till she reached the nearest railway-station, she had in her pocket the hoarded railway fare which would take her and the baby well out of sight and sound of Job Clay. She was not going to steal away to her father—that was what Job and his friends would at once suspect her of doing. If she had, they would not have followed after her, or sought to bring her and her incubus back under present circumstances. They would have said poor Job was well quit of her and her tongue. Who should look after a young child, and be accountable for its welfare, save its mother? Moreover, it was all her doing. She had gone off on her own wild impulse, without consulting older and wiser people, as to the how and the where of her going. Better let her cool down and come to her senses at her leisure, suffering the unlucky chap who had the ill fortune to be tied to her to rest a bit and recover his spirit.

Honor had no objections, but she had also a malicious satisfaction in doubling upon Job and his champions, and putting them on a wrong scent. She was not going home to her father to eat her leek, to tell him it had all turned out as he had prophesied, and in proof of her repentance to burden him gratuitously with the support of Job Clay's child. Besides, short as the time was since Honor's mother's death, her father had found it long enough



to recognize that his married sister was not sufficient for the post she had undertaken as mistress of a joint establishment, and mother and aunt in one to his children. He had taken to himself a second wife. Honor would have had to encounter a strange step-mother, to whom her miserable story would have been decidedly unwelcome. The girl was therefore bound for the house of a more distant relative, a cousin of her mother's, the recollection of whom had recurred to her lately with a glimmering spark of hope. Lyddy Atkins would take her in for all the time she wished to stay, were it but for the gratification of turning Honor's story outside in, loudly blaming and loudly deploring all round, and chattering to her heart's content over a fine bit of family scandal. Through Lyddy Atkins—scheming, inventive, unhesitating Lyddy, with a craving to have her finger in all her acquaintances' pies—some arrangement might be made for the disposal of the child and the finding of employment for the mother; at least, Lyddy was not stuck-up or exclusive, or chary of burning her fingers in those neighbors' pies of hers. Her husband, Henry Atkins, a builder by trade and necessity, a public agitator airing the people's wrongs and his own aspirations by choice, was far too busy to interfere with his wife's proceedings. If only Honor's exhausted muscle and nerve would carry her to the station! They did stand the strain, though the only sustenance they got was from the hunch of dry bread she gnawed with feverish ravenousness as she tottered along till she entered the

station gate as night was beginning to fall, took out her ticket at the office, made her way, half-blind with weariness, through the groups of her fellow-passengers, and sank, on the verge of fainting, in the corner of a third-class carriage. She did not faint, however; she was too exhilarated by having gained her end. When the train began to move, and the light from a lamp fell on her wan face, the motherly woman next Honor looked anxiously at her, and offered to take the infant from her. She gave up the baby without demur; indeed, she pulled herself together to nod reassuringly to her companion, with the best imitation of a smile the girl had attempted for months. The tension of her body and mind relaxed, and she fell into a heavy sleep, while the good Samaritan by her side minded the baby.

When Honor awoke there was many a mile between her and the village of Hayes, and the first sun's rays were striking on the blue roofs of the little town of Burntwood, which was Lyddy Atkins's present abiding-place; for Lyddy, partly from the pressure of circumstances, partly on account of her husband's mission, was somewhat of a peripatetic philosopher.

Honor fed the baby, washed and tidied herself in the waiting-room, and smoothed down the child's calico nightgown before she again wrapped it in the shawl. But it was characteristic that, though she had a small bundle of clothes, as well as the child, wound up in the shawl, she did not take from it a single article—such as a gay cotton hood, or a pair

of red woollen boots—which could brighten the uncompromising bareness and poverty of the child's dress.

The morning was fine, so that the little walk in the outskirts of the town, to which the address of Lyddy Atkins carried her, was not in itself unpleasant, though it was taken fasting, by a young woman just off a railway journey and lately risen from a sick-bed, whose principal refreshment had been the deep sleep of exhaustion.

The air itself revived Honor, who till her marriage with Job had been a robust young creature. The little birds were twittering and chirping in their nests in the villa shrubberies, calling on their mothers to be quick with their breakfasts. Honor heard them with a vague sense of pleasure, but with not the slightest inclination to regard it as an allegory. She was equally insensible to the lessons conveyed by a pet Alderney cow, industriously licking over its calf in a paddock, and to a mother cat fondly purring and performing the same elaborate toilet to a family of kittens, comfortably ensconced in a dilapidated basket just within the open door of a shed. Honor looked at them all with great, gray, lack-lustre eyes, in so far as any sympathy with their animal tenderness went. She did not grasp the living core of that bundle of hers more tightly, or press it once to the breast which felt so spent.

Lyddy Atkins's cottage, fresh with new paint, and bright with the glitter of clean windows, presented quite a thriving appearance. So did Lyddy her-

self—a plump, red-cheeked little woman in a trim stuff gown, with her brown hair showing very few streaks of gray, tidily knotted up and fastened with a comb behind, while in front it was fluffed into a cheerful bounce of a fringe. Lyddy's fat old fox-terrier, Punch, too lazy and well off to do more than grunt rather than growl his challenge to an intruder, was another harmonious detail in the picture. Lyddy Atkins was one of those women who contrive to be well housed, well clad, and well fed whatever betide. She and her husband were a childless couple, and Henry Atkins was a good workman in receipt of good wages when he chose to work; but then, as everybody knew, he did not often choose, and it was equally well understood that "agitating" was a "thankless"—that is, a profitless—vocation in reference to the coin of the realm. The Atkinses' frequent change of dwelling within a certain circuit was suspicious; but the fact remained that Lyddy had not a wrinkle of care on her rosy face, and always appeared well-to-do.

### III

“MY stars ! where ’ave you dropped from, Honor Clay ?” Lyddy cried, as she opened the door to Honor, her little round eyes distending as far as the fat in which they were enclosed would let them ; “and you seem fit to drop. Sit down this minent, and ’ave a sup of port wine till I can get you a cup of tea and a hegg, and then you’ll tell me your news.”

Lyddy was always hospitable, whether strictly at her own expense, or in a loose way at her neighbor’s ; but that was a mystery into which nobody who had not a special right was entitled to pry.

“An’ I see you ’ave brought your bairn”—looking at the bundle from a safe distance as she bustled about, with the doubtful, slightly scared expression with which spinsters, bachelors, and childless husbands and wives are apt to contemplate that wonder of wonders, an infant of days, or weeks.

Honor thankfully swallowed the freely bestowed food and drink, which moistened her parched lips and throat, appeased the pitiful craving at her stomach—which survived what had been her dire poverty, like a doleful echo, for months to come—and loosened her tongue.

The listener to Honor’s tale was keenly interested,

and showed herself loud in commiseration and reprobation, but she made a protest at one item of the story.

"I ha' had it in my head to leave him," Honor was saying, with a calmness which was startling, "since afore baby, here, comed. I ha' been saving up and hiding away pennies, and a threepenny bit at a time, though it weren't easy, Cousin Lyddy, I can tell 'ee, and me sick wi' hunger the most of the time."

"Poor Honor! poor lass! Oh, the wastrel, the idle, neglectful scoundrel! He'll come to want hisself, 'e'll die in a ditch, and serve him right!" pronounced Lyddy, with much fervor.

"He's come to want already," replied the girl-wife, with the same wellnigh appalling composure, "and it's like his friends—t'owd sinners—will desert him in the long-run." Then she came to the point at which Lyddy had felt compelled to interpose. "I counted summat on baby's being dead-born, I were that done for; and then there would ha' been less expense and trouble."

"Ye must not speak like that, Honor! I never 'eard the like!" cried the childless woman, in active condemnation. "A mother wishin' her bairn, her first-born bairn, out of the way! Why, to 'ear the most of them speak, they would go distracted at the bare thought."

"I do not care," said Honor, sullenly. "They may be a parcel o' hypocrites for aught I can tell—though mother were fond enough on us, to the end, for all the work we cost her," she added, with re-

luctant repentance, throwing back the head, from which she had removed the hat, against the bar of the rocking-chair—a favorite piece of furniture with Lyddy, in which she had installed her guest. “But what do I want wi’ a bairn, me as was a bairn mysen only the other day, as you said a minent ago? An’ it’s Job Clay’s bairn, as he’s bound to provide for, which he leaves on my hands.”

“Then what do ye think to do, Honor?” asked Lyddy, more soberly than was her wont. “Them Clays never oughter to burden you with the sole keep of the bairn. The couple at t’Owd Lamb were rips, but there was a brother of young Job’s steadier than ’im. Your mother wished you ’ad kep’ company with he instead of Job. He left the place, but he may be found, more by token that he came in this direction. I ’eard tell on ’im a year ago, when we was livin’ at Birdcup.”

“He ha’ left this world, then, sin’ that,” said Honor, not so much sarcastically as in the same unmoved tone; the very foundations of her soul might have been ice-bound but for a strain of scorn in her voice. It was the latent arrogant scorn of the robust constitution which had been hers at starting, that for the moment had forgotten its own collapse, in relation to puny and weak natures. “Them Clays hadn’t no mettle, nor pith neither, in body nor mind. Job couldn’t ever resist the bottle when it comed in his way, and Will dropped and died in his twenties. He were a married man too, and his wife were of the same kidney. She couldn’t pull hersen through the

carryin' and bearin' o' so many as three childer, so she died afore him, and the orphants were took to the House. It were first when we was married, and I offered to do for one, but laziness was settled in his bones, and the love o' the drink, as his uncle and aunt plied him wi', had fair mastered him. It were plain he would not work for his own, let alone his brother's."

There was nothing to be hoped for from this quarter, and Lyddy Atkins repeated vaguely for so resourceful a woman :

"Then what will you do, Honor? Couldn't you happily for a turn in the 'ouse yoursen, till you were fair well again? You would be in the 'firmary, so that your diet would not be that bad." It was significant how glibly the apparently well-to-do woman made the suggestion.

But Honor, in the midst of her apathy and weakness, exhibited a distinct aversion to the proposal.

"I ain't going into the House, not an' I can help it," she said, with decision. "I thought as how you would keep the baby for me, Cousin Lyddy," she proceeded to blurt, with abrupt candor. "You do be main fond o' dumb things, and it do not squeal loud, or often. I think, if it were fed and seen to regular, and laid on the rug afore the fire, it wouldn't plague you more'n a dog or a cat. Cousin Henry is so much from home, it would not ha' a chance of putting him out."

"Bless the girl! calling her chile 'it,' as if it were a cold corp, or a brute beast whose gender her could not guess at!" cried Lyddy, in pure excite-



ment and astonishment. "'Ave you not given 'er—she is a gal, ain't she?—a name, though Job Clay had no hand in it? Be she not christened?"

"No, she ben't," said Honor, shortly. "How could her be? Job Clay weren't a church member. No more were I; and where was I to light on godmothers and a godfather for an oonwelcome arrival like she?"

"The more shame to ye both!" cried Lyddy, in righteous indignation. "I would 'ave stood if you 'ad haxed me, and I would 'ave made 'enry stand, sooner than the bairn should not have been made a Chrissen. But there's a good time coming"—she began to soften—"I dessay what with your oonlucky marriage and your mother's death, and your father's quittin' Hayes, and Job Clay's goin' post-haste to the bad, you 'ad 'ardly time to turn yourself. You'll call her 'Lyddy'; that were your mother's name, as it is mine."

"Mother's name is a deal too good for Job Clay's bairn," said Honor, disdainfully.

"Tut! Honor, do not be that bitter; bitterness don't ever pay. You 'ave shook yourself free of your man—let that content ye; think no more on him." Then Lyddy's volatile mind turned, as other minds would have turned in the beginning, to the absurd and exasperating idea, which touched Lyddy personally, that Honor had possessed the "cheek" to air. "What 'ave I to do with babbies," she proclaimed, in displeasure and dismay, "that you should bring your'n to my door? I know nowt of babbies; 'enry lets me 'ave whoever

I likes in the 'ouse, since he 'as to make his company scarce, but that's neither here nor there. No, I'm sorry, mortal sorry for ye, Honor Clay, but I cannot help you here."

Lyddy Atkins was sincere in her regret. She was a good-natured, obliging woman in what cost her little or nothing. She liked to be popular with her friends and relations; it was really a distress to her to fail poor Honor in her strait.

But Honor was not silenced. She continued in the extremity of the situation to urge her suit.

"Not for a consideration, Cousin Lyddy? I never meant nowt else. I'll be steady on my feet and as strong as a horse in no time, now that I'm rid o' him, or that he's no longer within cry to rile me with his misdoings. I'll go into service; I can scrub and wash if I tries, and I'll pay you honest, whatever you ax from my wage, see if I don't. If I fails to get a place, or if by any chance I lose it, as sure as death I'll come faithful and fetch away the chile. You believes me, Lyddy?"

Lyddy believed her implicitly; she knew Honor better than Honor knew herself. Lyddy was satisfied that nothing short of death would prevent the girl from keeping her promise. The depth of the conviction caused the proposal to meet with more favor in Lyddy's eyes. In spite of all the comforts—approaching to luxuries—in her house, which was well filled, if the furniture was somewhat motley, and had the air of having been picked up here and there, Lyddy was apt to find ready money scarce. Supposing Honor did recover flesh and

fibre, she might earn a good wage—she had wit and energy enough to do it—and pay a liberal allowance for the maintenance of her baby.

Honor, simple as she was in comparison with her mother's cousin Lyddy, was sufficiently quick to perceive she was gaining ground. She hastened to press her advantage by offering an "arles," or pledge, of the solemn obligation she took upon her.

"Ha' you forgot grandfather's buttons, Cousin Lyddy?" and she began eagerly fumbling in her parcel. "Mother divided them atween me and my sister Sally, the week mother died. No, Job Clay knew nowt about them then, or they'd been swallowed down in drink in t'Owd Lamb months back. He had seed the buttons, in course, but he never knowd mother had parted them and gi'ed them away. Here's my share, cousin, till I'm my own sen again, and take a place, and pay you from my wage."

What Honor put into Lyddy's hand, ready extended and fain to clutch whatever came in its way in the shape of subsidy or *douceur*, was, of all things, the half of a rosary of gold and ebony beads.

Honor's grandfather had been in his youth a valet, or "body-servant," to one of the sons of the squires of Hayes Hall. This son had proved a roving blade. He had been as far afield as South America, where he had been mixed up with one of the chronic civil wars in which a Spanish colonial state was embroiled. Among the heterogeneous jetsam and flotsam which had fallen to the English gentleman's servant, who had been engaged

with his master on the side of the winners in an assault on a considerable town, was the rosary. It had been the property of a devout Spanish donna, whose festival beads, blessed by the Pope, were destined by the irony of fate to come into rustic, heretical hands, in remote England, and to be bartered for a purely mundane purpose.

Lyddy's small eyes lit up with admiration and greed as she handled the spoil.

"I'll keep 'em for ye, all right, honor bright ! and I'll keep the hinfant too, if I finds as 'ow I can manage her. There ain't no hurry for you taking service, Honor. You'll bide with me ; we'll be fine company for each other, till you 'ave come round, and is fit for work. When ye're gone, I'll do my best for the chile. You never knowed me 'ard on cat or dog, bird or fish. I've kep' gold-fish just for the pleasure of givin' them clean water and crumbs and that, and lookin' at them a-whiskin' of their shiny tails. Why, it will be like 'avin' a doll again to dress up and cosset ! You wasn't fond on dolls, Honor ; you'd liefer run with your brothers and turn wheels, and play with tops and marbles. You was a fair tomboy when I paid my first visit to Hayes. I'll go out this very afternoon, and get them at Crowther's to give me some Turkey red cotton-cloth, and dimity for a pinny, and a remnant of riband to tie up her sleeves when she's docked. Them trifles will cost Crowther's nowt ; they ain't worth speaking on. If they're agreeable at the shop, I may take on a yard or two of flannelette for a shawl. See if I do not rig the mite

out smart. Let me see her face. Eh, Honor, her ain't a beauty!—forgive me for saying it. Her's awful red; but mebbe it's the journey, or the nettle-rash, or the gum as your mother would 'old forth on. Never mind, it's the fine feathers as do make the fine birds!"

An hour or two later Lyddy made a fresh suggestion to Honor, who was inquiring whether there was any charing work she could get to do in Burntwood, when she was fit for it, explaining at the same time—

"But I'll not bide on wi' you, Cousin Lyddy, not to shame you wi' the state I'm in. I will not take more from you than I can help, lest I should not be able to pay it back, and I do not ha' a stitch o' clothes more'n them rags I'm standin' in. I'll find some cheap hole as is safe in the poorer part o' the town—I ha' learned not to be partickler—where I can bide when I'm not out at work."

"I 'ave thought on summat better than that, wench," Lyddy cried, in triumph. "When 'enry were away speechifyin' in the spring, he were down in Cleeveshire. He were speakin' near a farm-'ouse called Meadowlands, when he was set on by a lot of brutes of roughs, as flung stones at him and pulled him down from the platform, breakin' his leg. I were in a fine fry when he were well enough to write and tell me of the haccident. But it's an ill wind as blows ne'er a body good. It weren't the farm 'ands as misused 'enry, and neither were they nor their master on his side of politics; but as they

was decent folk, they was that sorry for his injury, they had him carried into the farm-'ouse, and sent for a doctor, and let him lie and be treated, and his leg put in plaster. The farmer and his wife thought to make up to 'enry for what he had suffered from their country folks, so they stuffed him with 'ome-killed mutton, and 'ome-cured bacon, 'ome-made bread, and 'ome-brewed beer, and milk, and butter, and heggs, till he came back to me as fat as a porpus. That was 'ow he 'appened to be that thick with them Marshalls, the farmer's family. Mrs. Marshall telled he her wanted a servant from a distance, to come into the 'ouse. She had been the Board School mistress, and she said her were too well acquaint with everybody, and that there was jealousies atween her old scholars —as to which she would take for her maid. It's more like there was things about hersen," commented Lyddy, with the quickness to suspect evil which often accompanies the unscrupulous good nature that does not find it difficult to condone a sin, "things as *they* knew, but *she* wished forgot. Anyway, her was seekin' a strange servant gal from a distance."

Honor's thin white face had brightened a little, but it fell again presently.

"She will ha' found what she was seekin' for by now," she objected, regretfully.

"No, she ha'n't," answered Lyddy, briskly, "for 'enry came across Marshall in the train within the last ten days, and he complained that his missus weren't suited yet, for her wanted a nonsuch of a

gal as weren't allus on the lookout for followers, and didn't seek a night out in the week, or a whole day more'n oncet in the year, but would settle down, and find her pleasure in her work. Marshall and 'enry laid their 'eads together, and agreed the missus of Meadowlands would be long on 'ittin' on her nonsuch."

"Not if she will take me," said Honor, with decision.

"Well, her would even take a widder, her man said; and certain sure you're the next thing to a widder. I ain't clear that you ain't better, for you won't want to go trapesing in search of another man. The place seems just made for you, and you for the place," remarked Lyddy, with much complacency. "And it ain't a bad place at all, 'enry allus maintains, when he pertends I ain't up to the mark with his victuals. Decent folks of their kind; plenty to eat and to drink. Narrer in their views—terrible narrer—as them country gentry and farmers and their men mostly are, compared with them mill and coal owners as 'ave riz from the ranks, and not gone too far on the road, or even the pottery lads and factory 'ands; but not oonreasonable or unkind in their way. Her's a bit prim and awful mannerly, as could not be expected otherwise, seein' she were an old maid and a school-mistress afore she got married; but not a termagan' nor hard-fisted. My gal, you 'ave fallen on your feet this time, and no mistake—the bairn off your 'ands, and you fitted with a place afore you could say 'Jack Robinson.' You were wise to come to Cousin

Lyddy, and she'll take care of your gaffer's trash of buttons."

Before the day was over another brilliant idea struck Lyddy—another stroke of the manœuvring, intriguing genius, which was in the woman only partially developed, was made by her.

"I tell you what, Honor, you'd better say nothin' to nobody of that oonfortunate marriage of yourn, and of the bairn here. All hordinary married couples think as 'ow a man and his wife should abide by their bargain if they want to be counted respectable. They ain't all as ready to make allowance as I be. They'll say that there mun be faults on both sides, and set theirselves to spy mischiefs. If you 'ave but a sore 'ead, they'll argufy you're pinin' for your bairn. No, Honor, if you'll take my advice, you'll make no brag of being a married 'oman and a mother at your age, and of what you've 'ad to come through with the bairn, and that."

"I ha' no call to brag," answered Honor, in short, wellnigh surly protest; "and them would be the last things I'd brag on if I cared to brag. As for the bairn, it's Job Clay's bairn, and that is enough."



#### IV

THERE had been a good run with the Cleeveshire foxhounds, and a large "field" to welcome the first open day after a spell of frost, when a bad accident happened to a gentleman who had only joined the hunt for the day. He was heavily thrown over a stiff fence, and was carried on a hurdle, with little more than the life left in him, into the farm-house of Meadowlands. There he lay between life and death for a period of eight weeks. It was not that he had not friends among the members of the hunt, who would gladly have had him removed to one of their country-houses; but the doctors absolutely forbade it at first, and when consciousness returned to the sufferer he announced himself perfectly satisfied with his lodgings—all the more so that he knew he could recompense his host and hostess for the trouble he gave them. The tenant of the farm, a worthy, well-to-do man, hunted himself in the season, and it seemed the most natural thing in the world that the strange gentleman who had come such an awkward "cropper" should be carried into Marshall's house—the nearest at hand—and there carefully waited on by Mrs. Marshall and her servant till the gentleman's own man could arrive to

relieve them of the most arduous part of the undertaking.

Although the stranger, Mr. Ormthwaite, of Ormthwaite Manor, in the Midlands, had many friends, it seemed he had few near relations, so that the Marshalls' household was not burdened with a fine lady of a wife, or with a supercilious sister or daughter, in addition to the sick man.

The sick man himself, as soon as he knew what he was about, behaved so as to give the least possible annoyance. He was not a young man; he was forty-five years if he was a day, and, therefore, he had, as he would have said, no excuse for being exacting and thoughtless in the amount of attention he required. In point of fact, he was considerate to a degree which could only arise from the inbred courtesy of a gentleman—one of a long line of gentlemen, who had held a consistently high ideal, and had more or less walked up to it. Far and near in the neighborhood of Ormthwaite Manor an Ormthwaite's word was regarded as good as his bond. It was reckoned confidently that he would walk in the footsteps of his predecessors, live reverently, cleanly, and temperately, be sane and sweet-blooded, be neighborly, do what he could to promote the welfare of his fellows—especially those on his property, who, in spite of the strong, sweeping tide of democracy, still looked to him as to a natural head and leader. Beyond all this there was the essential culture and refinement, the good taste as well as the good feeling, of generations. The last might very well have existed without the

first. Mr. Ormthwaite might have been the most pleasant-spoken of unprincipled scamps, even at the discreet age of forty-five ; but, happily, in him the rectitude of a man of honor, in deed as well as in word, was united to the gracious bearing of a gentleman.

Mr. Ormthwaite was a revelation to Mrs. Marshall, the ex-school-mistress, whose formal mannerliness was far eclipsed by the unstudied, native politeness of his easy, frank simplicity.

To Honor Clay—accustomed in her earlier days to primitive roughness and rudeness, and subjected for a time to the inconceivable self-abandonment of an ill-conditioned yokel, who, though hardly strong enough to be brutal, exemplified his weakness by the basest selfishness, the grossest neglect of all natural ties and duties—Mr. Ormthwaite was a greater marvel still. He lay there, in his extreme prostration or acute pain, with scarcely a murmur. He grudged to keep his servant, Tolley, awake of nights. He took care that the man was provided not only with bodily refreshments, but with illustrated newspapers to entertain his mind. He thanked her, Honor, and Mrs. Marshall for the smallest service, as if he ought to be ashamed to have them walking or standing about his bed for his benefit, while he was lying still and letting them wait upon them. His accounts were so settled between him and his Maker that he could face death, which hovered very near at times, without panic, while he was as willing to live—to return to the burden of existence, the strain of duty, the com-

1

pensating natural and human joys strewn liberally in the world for the men and women with loyal eyes and single hearts to distinguish and accept them, as if he had been an ignorant boy in the exuberant hopefulness of his teens.

Mr. Ormthwaite was verily as an archangel to Honor Clay.

Gregory Ormthwaite had relished most things in his honest, intellectual, kindly life — relished them with such a healthful keenness, as well as temperance of appetite, that he had been slow to make any change in his condition. He had grown up an only child. He had seen the father and mother, whose right hand he had been, fall at last as sheaves ripe for the garner, and still he had been content with his ample sources of happiness; he had not been tempted to make any alteration in his circumstances which should crown or mar all else. But he had enjoyed few things more than his convalescence at Meadowlands' farm-house. He had never been seriously ill before, and he had to realize in an agreeable experience that those speak the truth who say so many recoveries from serious illness are so many fresh spring-times of renewed youth, indemnifying the patient for his season of dolor.

The surroundings, inside and out, of a farm-house, in their very homeliness, were a pleasing variety to this easily-satisfied, strong-minded, cheery-tempered man. They neither irked nor bored him. He liked to lie on a chintz-covered couch in the best bedroom at Meadowlands, and

look round on the drugget-protected, unfaded Kidderminster carpet beneath his feet, and the chrysanthemum-patterned paper on the walls, with engravings of the queen and royal family, the M.F.H., and the horses of most renown breed on the farm. He liked still better to have the couch wheeled before the window, though his lookout included nothing better than the chill blue of the winter sky, the wind-swept, straggling rose bushes, the empty beds where lavender and mint flourished in summer, the thyme and periwinkle borders, the orchard trees, the beehives, all met together in the Meadowlands flower and vegetable garden. Nay, there were half a dozen ducks privileged to waddle there from October to March. They waged war with the slugs prepared to make havoc among the early vegetables, and the ashen gray caterpillars, ensconced like so many mummies in the crevices of the mossy walls, awaiting their resurrection.

Mr. Ormthwaite had what is termed the faculty of "vision." He could look out on the stripped garden and see it in its June bloom, with Marshall lending a hand to nail up the displaced pear and plum branches, which had to be touched gingerly because they were laden with newly-set fruit, with Mrs. Marshall plucking a rose or a white carnation to hold between her finger and thumb that it might not spoil her dress, and with Honor Clay walking up and down between the rows of pease, gathering the pods. He could not glance beyond the garden to the point at which he could get a

glimpse of the yellow stackyard and red-tiled offices, without a vivid realization of the hearty bustle of hay-making and harvest, with the rustic sociability of "the cows'-milking," "the calves'-feeding," and "the horse-suppering." Like all men who take an interest in their kind, he had a lively curiosity with regard to the history and experience of the fellow-creatures among whom he was thrown. He was unable to occupy himself with books or newspapers for a time; he was sooner fit to chat with Marshall, or with Mrs. Marshall, or with their handsome and sedate—nay, dignified—maid-servant, Honor Clay, to whom he had been indebted at a critical moment in his illness. She would come in to see if he wanted anything, or to lay his table for dinner or supper, when his man, Tolley, was out. He, Ormthwaite, had a habit of sending Tolley for a stroll and a smoke, and to have his dulness cheered and his self-importance flattered by witnessing a game of village cricket, and being called upon to help the rector and the school-master to act as umpires on the occasion.

Tolley's master would entertain himself by picturing little scenes in which the persons brought thus unexpectedly into close contact with him figured. He would imagine Marshall and Mrs. Marshall in the church chancel on their wedding morning; Marshall red and flurried, feeling as if he were making an ass of himself in his frock-coat and kid gloves, in alarm lest he should not say the proper words at the proper moment in the service; Mrs. Marshall, attended by another Board School

mistress as bridesmaid, behaving with a circumspection equal to her modesty, because she was playing a part which she had rehearsed from the time she was a child in short frocks, with a ball and skipping-rope.

Mr. Ormthwaite would also try to see, in the past, the stately, humbly-born beauty, Honor Clay ; but he was baffled by the fact that he could no more conjure up an appropriate scene in Honor Clay's earlier life than he could collect any save the scantiest particulars of her history. She had come from some distance to be Mrs. Marshall's maid-servant. She had fitted so well into the place that she had filled it for five years, winning more and more the confidence of her master and mistress, and given them increasing satisfaction. What was remarkable in the case was that she had escaped to a great degree the envy and hostility of the out-workers and dairy-maids on the farm. They did no more than hint at the poor way Honor was in when she arrived at Meadowlands, at her ignorance of so much as the usages of farm service, and even then of her "stand-offishness" and her obstinate refusal to let out a word of her former doings—not to those who made the greatest advances to her, and stood her friends from the beginning. This would have been unpardonable if the offender had also been a tale-bearer and mischief-maker, or if she had been unwilling to return kindnesses shown to her, by good deeds on her side. But, far from it, Honor was always ready to take more than her share of the work, or to do it

single-handed when a neighbor was ill or wanted a holiday. The new-comer learned with such quickness and thoroughness all there was to learn at Meadowlands that her unstinted help soon became of consequence to those who cared to avail themselves of it.

As a matter of course, Mr. Ormthwaite did not press his inquiries by means of Tolley, nor did the gentleman address a single fishing question to Honor herself, when he recognized the reserve she maintained. He was too upright himself, he knew the world too well—not on the seamy side alone, as a mere amateur detective-scavenger, occupied solely with the bad drains and foul sewers of vice and crime—to conclude that where there was shrinking reticence and an inclination to proud secrecy there must needs be hidden depravity and degradation, either in the past or the present. It was well that God's pure air and light should circulate freely, but innocence was to be found in many a shady, unventilated corner. He would have pledged himself at any time, even when his knowledge of Honor Clay was slightest, that, whatever she might choose to keep back of her antecedents, she was a good woman. Her girlish comeliness, which had been so nearly blighted when it was little beyond the bud, had, under favorable conditions, ripened into a beauty which approached majesty. He was reminded of the peasant women of the Roman Campagna, who will carry bundles of cut grass on their shoulders, and lead goats by their tethers, with the air and gait of princesses.

1



Naturally, though Ormthwaite did not seek to penetrate the obscurity in which the Marshalls' beautiful and resourceful maid-servant was shrouded, it piqued his interest, and led him, in the languor and inactivity of recent illness, to dwell still more on her individuality, as contrasted with the common types of humanity around her, which those who ran might read.

But the chief reason, or what Mr. Ormthwaite thought was the chief reason, which drew him to ponder on the young woman and her probable fortunes, was the degree to which he had been indebted to her presence of mind. He had been credibly informed by those around him that when he was brought to the farm-house more dead than alive, what life was left in him had been saved by the mother-wit of Honor Clay, who had not even attended an ambulance class. Had she not, by an improvised tourniquet, checked the flow of blood from a severed artery? Had she not excluded the air from the wound between the ribs, which his horse's hoof had dealt him? and if the air had not been excluded he could not have lived till a doctor came. The doctor was good enough to say so, and the doctor should know. More than that, the severed artery had to be tied, the wound dressed, and the morsel of his skull-bone which was pressing on his brain, raised. Then when Mrs. Marshall had grown too sick to be of any use, and even Marshall had blanched in holding a candle, this young woman, Honor Clay, had filled the vacant place, and held the light steadily, taken the sponge

from the doctor, handed him each instrument and bandage, and never kept her eyes for more than a second from the patient's ghastly face, so that any change on it might be reported instantly.

Mr. Ormthwaite's life was not so worthless to him that he should be ungrateful to the woman whose admirable courage and nerve had saved him, or that he should not occupy much of his compulsory idleness in pondering how he could recompense her. Almost from the first he shrank from offering her money; yet the subject, though perplexing, was not disturbing to him till the time of his stay at Meadowlands was drawing to a close, when a cloud appeared to come over his good spirits, and to mar the serenity of his convalescence. He would remain whole days silent and abstracted, with his fine forehead, from which the chestnut hair had commenced to recede, knitted into a frown, and his aristocratic features, which in repose were a model of what the features of a man of his stamp should be, contracted with a new care, and a struggle which had only lately risen within him. The eclipse did not last long. He was a man who, as a rule, made up his mind without much procrastination, and, when it was made up, acted upon it with short, sharp decision. He was his own master. He was wholly untrammelled; even his worldly estate presented no hinderance to his doing whatever he thought fit to do. He was the sole owner of very considerable landed property, which, for a wonder in this generation, was unencumbered, and he had as much ready money at his disposal as his conscience would

allow him to keep apart from his needs, without embarking it in some enterprise which might benefit the public at large. In short, he was a rich man, who was not involved in such a net-work of enterprises and undertakings as ends by leaving a very millionaire without a minute of leisure or a penny to spend, outside of the crushing weight of his engagements and obligations. Moreover, he was not a boy, to take a resolution lightly, and, having taken it, to change his mind with the facility of the wind.

## V

TOLLEY had been in London for the day on some business connected with his master's departure from Meadowlands ; but Mr. Ormthwaite was quite able to do without him for the time. In fact, he was so independent of being waited upon that Mrs. Marshall had taken the opportunity of accompanying her husband in his dog-cart to do her deferred shopping, while he joined the farmers in the corn exchange of the market-town. If their guest wanted anything before the return of his host and hostess Honor would see to his wants. He did want something, and it was to Honor he looked to furnish him with what he desired.

When Mr. Ormthwaite rang the bell and Honor went to Mrs. Marshall's drawing-room, to which the invalid had been transferred, she found him wandering up and down, a little like a caged and fretted lion, among the lamp and flower stands, the piano, the work-table, the one large ottoman, and the small red-colored couch and chairs with which Mrs. Marshall had stuffed the small room, under the impression that she had, with laudable pains, converted a farm-house best parlor into an orthodox drawing-room.

Honor looked at the fire—it was blazing brightly

—that could not be the want ; at the windows, but it was too early in the afternoon, even if Mr. Ormthwaite had not loved an outlook, to exclude the clear, pale golden green of a frosty sunset. It was not the tea-hour—what could it be ? Honor stood still, in doubt, facing the occupant of the room, and the two remained for an instant opposite each other in silence.

The first remark of a stranger entering the room at that moment would have been, what a singularly fine-looking couple the two made ! Both were tall and well developed. Ormthwaite was erect, broad-shouldered, with a finely set head. He knew so well what to do with his legs and arms that they did not obtrude themselves on anybody's attention. The training, grooming, and bearing of a well-born, well-bred gentleman were written all over him, but not too conspicuously. The man's soul was big enough to be incapable of finding itself obliterated by the most perfect outer husk. It was the first day that he had cast aside his dressing-gown, and stood in his ordinary tweed morning suit. Its very ordinariness served, as no velvet or brocade coat could have done, to emphasize the wearer's natural and acquired advantages. The common dress of an Englishman pointed out this man's superiority—not in the cut of his clothes alone—to Marshall, who, in going to market, wore a wonderfully similar morning suit. Somehow it would not fit him, though he had been as carefully measured by his tailor as Mr. Ormthwaite had been measured by a more exalted knight of the shears. Yet Marshall's

breeches would creep up, his waistcoat would do ditto, and the small of the back of his coat would be between his shoulders, until all the good clothes on his thick-set person would look as if they were working their way up as far as his burly neck, when they would certainly conspire to throttle him.

The gentleman's gentleman, Tolley, was, on the contrary, tall and spare, and his half-livery was not very unlike a gentleman's clothes, if one failed to fix one's eyes on his white necktie and the cockade in his hat. But his coat hung away from his shoulder-blades as if it were suspended on two pegs, whereas Mr. Ormthwaite's coat, though it was worn on a body shrunk by illness, did not fail to seem as if it belonged to him, and he to it.

Though Gregory Ormthwaite was twenty years older than Honor Clay, they were fairly matched. The life he had led was sufficiently bountiful and wholesome to keep him in his prime with something of youth still on his side, but youth dignified by a man's responsibilities and obligations—fully acknowledged and faithfully fulfilled. There was no occasion for him to dye his hair or mustache, though there were a few threads of gray in the mustache, and the hair was receding from his wide forehead. There was not the slightest call for gentlemanlike cosmetics to erase crows' toes and wrinkles any more than there was for stays to confine undue corpulence. Possibly a certain additional refinement was lent to the face—always refined in its virile strength—by the illness which had wasted and blanched it, but it had at all times

little superfluous flesh to lose, and its usual hardy, open-air tints were not invaded by enough crimson to plead for washing out.

Honor's neck, bust, and limbs were all rounded firmly to full symmetry, without the slightest tendency to the overflowing lusciousness which, in the estimation of some, is wealth of beauty, while in the mind of others it is that excess of matter and suspicion of grossness which goes far to destroy all that is spiritual in the beauty. Her face had recovered the rich, warm brown which was its natural complexion. The lines of brow, cheek, and chin were more than lovely; they were grand, especially in profile. The dark gray, long-lashed eyes had a clear and steadfast light in them, as in the eyes of a Sibyl, or a Saint Catherine of Sienna.

Honor was not more than two-and-twenty, but she had borne a child, and been in the depths of misery. She looked twenty-five; she might even have been taken for thirty-five—thirty-five, unfaded and vigorous. Her dress became her, as it struck the man beside her, beyond what any other dress could have done, though he might live to alter his opinion in this respect. Mrs. Marshall had an innocent ambition to be genteel, and a loyal inclination to accept her rector's wife as her standard. The rector's wife had her parlor-maid clad according to precedent, in a scrupulously plain black woollen gown, with white collar, white cuffs, white apron, and a small white cap on her head. The Puritan simplicity and severity of the black and white, with its long, straight lines, suited Honor;

so did the spotless white cap, beneath which her dark hair—grown again to its full growth, and magnificent, like every other attribute she possessed—was braided and coiled like the hair of the Venus of Milo, in place of being shorn into an American “bang” and fluffed into the fashion of a barber’s block. Even Mrs. Marshall, whose locks were moulted and grizzled, sought to arrange them in the prevailing mode, because the rector’s wife, who was no younger than Mrs. Marshall, did so, while the Princess of Wales and all the princesses in the country showed in their turn the same elaborately got-up “heads.” But Mrs. Marshall had no idea what a refreshment it was to the cultured eye of Mr. Ormthwaite, who was not otherwise disloyal, to look on Honor Clay’s unconsciously classic disposal of her hair—even though it was surmounted by the harmless badge of servitude—in contrast to the mangled, towsled mops around him.

From the time he could stir from his couch or chair Mr. Ormthwaite had insisted on rising to his feet when, as he expressed himself, Mrs. Marshall or Honor Clay *favoured* him with her presence. To-day, however, he had so exhausted himself with his thoughts and his perambulations that he had to sit down for a moment to recover his bodily and mental equilibrium before he resumed the deferential attitude. It might be partly conventional, but it was also calculated to impress and win those for whom it was instinctively assumed, who were not accustomed to such courtesy.

“What is it, sir?” asked Honor, in bewilderment.



Her voice and speech had undergone a transformation in keeping with the change in her personal aspect. She had been for five years—those still, plastic years from seventeen to twenty-two—in companionship with comparatively educated people. Nay, Mrs. Marshall was, as might have been expected in an old school-mistress, a martinet in the proper use of the English language—so far as she knew it. She would even correct Marshall in his slips of the tongue, which was, perhaps, an abuse of her privileges. Honor, watchful to acquire whatever weapon would avail her in her single combat with fortune, having a quick ear, good abilities, and an extra share of the adaptability which is one of the prerogatives of her sex, picked up, in course of time, more civilized modes of expressing herself. She dropped the worst of her uncouth dialect till little was left of it, save an incorrect word and a false accent here and there.

He roused himself at her question, and got up, smiling, as he leaned against the window-frame.

“I want to have a talk with you, Honor, but I cannot in fairness ask you to sit down till you know what the talk is to be about; I have rung for you”—the incongruity of such a prelude to what he was going to say struck him, even as he spoke, with a mingled sense of comicality and vexation—“I have brought you here to ask if you will consent to be my wife.”

“Sir, you don’t mean it!” cried Honor, with a gasp, the room spinning round with her steady head, in the height of her astonishment and incredulity.

"Yes, I do mean it," he told her, with quick assurance. "I want you to think the matter over, and try whether you cannot give my petition a favorable consideration."

"It ain't fit," panted Honor, with her breath coming short, "no more than my sitting down with you in the drawing-room here. I am only the servant of the house, and you are a fine gentleman" (she might have said, a prince in my eyes). "Oh, sir, do not demean yourself by proposing such an unwarrantable thing! I cannot believe that you are fooling me. I would rather think the fever, as the doctor held at arm's-length, has come back and broken loose. You have not been like yourself for some days. Oh, sir, it do sound as if you have taken leave of your senses! Please lie down and keep quiet, and I will send one of the men for the doctor."

"You'll do nothing of the kind, Honor," said Ormthwaite; "you'll listen to me. More than that, you'll be more civil than to go on accusing me of being out of my senses, if you cannot find in your own heart some warrant for my behavior. I am as sane as I ever was, saner than you are at this moment, for I am afraid I have scared you, my poor girl, half out of your wits. You are right in one respect—I am not fooling you. I would put a pistol to my head sooner than do that, though I hold suicide in detestation, as the most profane and cowardly of all the refuges of lies. I have not forgotten the difference in our experience of life; I confess I have been worried beyond bounds lately

by thinking of the world's judgment—the more fool I—but I have come to the end of it; I am convinced I have, and I hope to be able to take you as far along with me. I solemnly declare to you, Honor, that I see in you qualities which would grace any station in life—qualities which would make any man who could value them supremely happy. Naturally, I desire to win you. I never cared for any woman before in the same way, though I am middle-aged. That may be another count against me. I cannot help it; I must plead my cause while it is in my power. I entreat that you will not reject my suit, and throw me back on myself with this desire, which I feel will swallow up all others, unsatisfied, when its satisfaction would be the very best that life has given or can give me.”

She stood trembling and abashed before him. She sought to thrust more impediments between them before laying bare to him the sordid tragedy of her life.

“Sir, remember your position, your pride—the pride as is becoming in such as you. Would you have your very servant despise you for mating with a fellow-servant, who has been lower than the lowest of your servants? Remember your friends, your neighbors!”

“My position has nothing to do with it,” he told her, with perfect composure. “I will raise you to my position, and my pride will be fittingly exercised in seeing the honor you will do to it and to me. You are no common woman, Honor; I take

no credit to myself for recognizing it, I only wish to profit by it."

"Nay, I am come of the commonest," she cried, striving in her anguish to deter him by what, in her conception, would still be the lesser humiliation in his eyes. "My father was the village wright. My mother washed for the squire's servants at the hall. I have been parted from my brothers and sisters, and I know nowt about them, save that, for certain, they have growd up working men and women, no better than me."

"Not a hundredth part so good, I dare say, unless you are all world's wonders," he told her, gayly, raising his eyebrows. He was perfectly prepared for this revelation of her origin. He knew she must have come of working people. "What do I care for your father and mother, and brothers and sisters, except that they are yours, and that I should be glad to do what I could to better their circumstances, if they want bettering? But it is not your father and mother, and brothers and sisters, I wish to marry; it is you, Honor, who have it in your power to make me the luckiest, happiest man in England, or to refuse to do it, thus showing yourself ready to spoil the life you saved," he finished, reproachfully.

"That is it," she declared, eagerly. "You have been carried away by a dream that I did great things for you, and your gentleman's spirit is all afire to pay me back a thousandfold. Sir, I did no more than any woman would have done for charity's sake, and, in course, I was pleased to do it."

My mistress would have done as much, and more ; but the sore sight, and the doctor's instruments, and the work they had to perform were too much for her. She is not young and strong like me, and she got sickified."

"Say no more to rob yourself of your due, for I maintain you are the dearest, most beautiful, best of women, and I will not have you decried—even by yourself. As for my friends, I was an only child ; I have no near relations to interfere and call in question what I choose to do. If I had I would scorn them from the bottom of my heart if, when your merits were made evident to them, they objected to my choice. But I am my own master, independent enough, rich enough, though if I know you—and I do know you better than you know yourself—you won't heed that much. I can take my own way, and build up my future life in the manner which I am certain will be most for my honor, and will insure my abiding satisfaction I need not say—and yours also, I trust?"

"Not love money !" she cried, almost wildly. "I ha' hoarded pennies and silver bits. The first half-sovereign I earned I could not sleep for thinking on it. I did not believe the purse under my pillow were safe enough to hide it in."

"That was because you earned it, my dear Honor," he said, soothingly, for he saw that her excitement was wellnigh uncontrollable. It was somewhat strange to him, and what he could not account for, in a woman whose quiet reasonableness and calm self-restraint had been conspicuous

throughout the two months of their momentous acquaintance.

Then Honor Clay yielded, with a groan, to the grievous necessity laid upon her. "It cannot be, Mr. Ormthwaite. I was married—married before I ever came to Meadowlands."

He started violently. The blood rushed to and receded from his pale face. The shock was so great to one who had not recovered his normal strength that he staggered under it.

She sprang towards him, threw her arms round him, and drew him down on the nearest chair.

"Oh, sir, do not mind me. Why do you care so much? Why, when you might get heaps on heaps a world better to be at your beck and call?"

"Tell me everything," he said, hoarsely. "You owe that to me"—and he plucked her by the sleeve. It was all he could do then, but the very feebleness of the force he employed rendered it like a grasp of iron to compel her to sit down near him and tell him.

"Yes," said Honor, rolling up her hands—he had often noticed how shapely they were, though they were reddened and roughened by work—in her white apron, and rocking herself to and fro in her extremity. "I have been a married woman, a mother, and a widow—I have knowed it all."

He rose to his feet like one electrified, with a long-drawn sigh of inexpressible relief and fervent gratitude.

"Then it is all ended," he said, as he bent over

her tenderly, "I would say, and think no more of it. Put it behind you, and forget it for the rest of your days. I know; and I trust you for what remains to be told, only I think, my dear love, it might be a comfort to you to confide all to me just this once."

She told him the whole story, not omitting or extenuating a single repulsive detail—her pitiable marriage, her husband's lack of all manliness and loyal regard for her, the fierce contempt she had felt for him, and their violent quarrels, with her want, her misery, and the fashion in which she had parted from him. She described her desperate journey to Burntwood to her kinswoman, Lyddy Atkins, and the way in which she had left her child and taken service at Meadowlands as a single woman because Lyddy had said it would give a better chance of succeeding in her aim. She went on to recount the facts that two years afterwards she had received, through her cousin, the tidings of Job Clay's death, and again, two years later, Lyddy had written to tell her the child was dead also. It had been taken with convulsions, and died within the day of its seizure.

All the time she was speaking, with dry sobs which half choked the words, he was holding her hands in his, stroking them softly, and saying, "Poor Honor! my poor, poor Honor!"

When she had finished he took her in his arms and kissed her on the mouth.

"Leave it all to me; I will make it all right," he pledged himself.

At his speech a ray of Heaven's light and peace stole, for the first time in her life, into Honor's heart, and lit it up so that all its dark places became visible, and melted it until its stoniness was changed into throbbing flesh.



## VI

GREGORY ORMTHWAITE accepted implicitly every word which Honor said to him ; but for her sake, still more than for his own, he was not the man to neglect any precaution to prevent such a hideous mistake as would be the undoing of both.

Accordingly, to Tolley's great disgust, in place of moving first to the comfortable rooms in town Mr. Ormthwaite was in the habit of occupying when the House was sitting, he took a journey on his own account—unfit as Tolley considered him—in another direction. He was not more than a couple of nights absent, and he returned looking the better in health for the expedition, and in more than his usual excellent spirits.

Still, poor Tolley felt there had been a serious imprudence, of which he could not have believed his master would have been guilty, not to say a breach of confidence in a man so open and above board as Mr. Ormthwaite was wont to be, towards an old and trusty servant. Mr. Ormthwaite comforted himself for hurting his servant's feelings by his reticence, in telling himself that Tolley would know in good time.

A first-class railway carriage conveyed the traveller easily enough past Burntwood, and on as far

as the village of Hayes. He came out at the very station which Honor had reached with such difficulty five years before. She had not said much of the life-and-death struggle of that afternoon, but he could guess it, and bent his brow at the recollection as he hailed a cab and drove to the village, alighting at the small commercial travellers' inn, the most respectable house of entertainment in the place, for "t'Owd Lamb" ale-house was out of reckoning in that respect. He had to husband his powers, for he was not up to the mark yet in bodily strength; and he was not without a grim suspicion, lurking in the background of his mind, that he might receive a horrible, crushing blow before he quitted the place. Common rumor was a notorious liar, and it was in all probability from common rumor—filtering through such a source as Honor's mother's cousin, who had advised the ignorant, broken-down young girl to pass herself off to strangers as a single woman—that the news of Job Clay's death had reached Honor. When he had fortified himself with what rest and refreshment he could take, he strolled down to the bar, and, in the absence of any "commercial gentleman," chatted with the landlord—a tolerably steady and well-to-do man, who took the customer's measure fairly, and marvelled what the dickens a gentleman like him could find to do for a couple of days. He had engaged the best bedroom for one night, perhaps for two, at Hayes. The landlady's mind was already much discomposed because her finest sheets were not finer, and the tureen of her

best dinner-service wanted a handle. More than that, she could not tell whether three courses would suffice for such a guest. But, whatever distress the landlady might experience, the landlord felt highly flattered when he was selected by the gentleman for a five minutes' gossip.

Mr. Ormthwaite asked if the village was purely agricultural, or if it had any other trade; thus showing that he knew nothing about the locality. He inquired the name of the vicar, and if the church and vicarage were close at hand, thus affording a further proof of his ignorance. He was curious about the condition of the laborers, and wished to ascertain if the rate of wages was low in the district. Not so low, he was told, as to prevent the laborer, when full-grown, and before he began to fail, being able to do pretty well for himself and his family, what with his allotment, and certain time-immemorial perquisites of goose-grazing on the strip of common, and faggot-cutting in a bit of natural wood, which was nobody's land, though the lawyer of the squire of the hall had made a grab at it, only the squire did not support his agent. To be sure, the working-man's moderate prosperity depended a good deal on his not being given too much to the drink.

Were drinking habits prevalent at Hayes?

Well, a goodish bit, particularly among the odd hands and the jobbers; but there was not so much hard drinking as there had been during the reign of Dick Clay, the publican at "t'Owd Lamb" ale-house. That were a sink of drink and iniquity of

various sorts. How Dick had kept his license was a miracle. But Dick, t'owd scoundrel, had died during the past winter, and his widow, who was not far behind him in going on the spree on her own hook, and in relishing rows, had got to be bedridden, and there was not the same entertainment and encouragement to loungers and soakers on the premises as there had been. Yes, Dick had done for the most of his kith and kin before he was floored himself.

Were they of much account, these men and women who could not stand alone, but must needs fall victims to their kinsman's temptations?

Nay, no great shakes at the best. Young Job Clay had nigh starved to death his poor young wife, as was come of better folk. She could not stand his treatment; she was drove beside herself. She ran away with her six-weeks'-old child, and had never been seen or heard of again. Folk had the fancy that she might have gone to her father, who had left the place a year before, and settled elsewhere; but how was the spent, penniless creature to travel any distance? It was more like she had leaped with her bairn into the old marl pit, which was half full of water. It ought to have been dragged to see if their bodies could be found.

What became of the rascal of a husband?

He caught the fever that was about the next harvest but one, and, as might have been looked for, he dropped off in a jiffy. He had drunk hisself to the last lining of his stomach and whole spot in his liver. Doctor said the harvest fever might

have been famine typhus or cholera morbus for the ghost of a chance the sot had of getting over it. He was always a weak mule of a lad.

What was the exact date of this miserable fellow's—Job Clay's—death?

The landlord stared at the inquisitor, and came to the conclusion either that the gentleman was speaking for speaking's sake—though he did not look a chatterbox—or that he was one of those Paul Pry's in all ranks, who would fain extract the heart from a stone.

Let the landlord see. The fever broke out two harvests before the last, when it was brought to the place by some strange harvest-men. It must be a matter of three years last August since Job Clay kicked the bucket.

On the following morning the visitor interviewed the vicar. The reverend gentleman was as much puzzled as the landlord of the commercial inn had been with regard to what could have brought such a man as Ormthwaite to Hayes, and what was the nature of his investigations into the fate of the scum of the earth like Job Clay. Had a connection between the Clays and some family of note and substance, which had existed unsuspected by the principals, suddenly come to light? Was it necessary to authenticate the doleful particulars of their disreputable deaths before the Clays' worldly claims to untold riches could be finally quashed? Yet the stranger had no air of a detective in plain clothes, not even of a great lawyer, though he could keep his secret, whatever it was.

The vicar was devoured with unsatisfied curiosity, while he afforded every facility for Mr. Ormthwaite to examine the parish register, and to cross-question the parish clerk, the parish doctor, and even the parish grave-digger.

Gregory Ormthwaite read in the register the record of the death of Job Clay on the 9th of August, 188—, at the age of twenty-one years, with a little note in the vicar's handwriting to the effect that he had officiated at the funeral of the said Job Clay, in the portion of the churchyard allotted to paupers, his uncle, Richard Clay, the lessee of the ale-house, the "Old Lamb," having declined to pay the necessary sum for a grave in another quarter.

The parish clerk certified to the entry in the register. The parish doctor recalled the case and its hopelessness from the first.

Following the grave-digger to the weediest, most nettle-invaded portion of the burying-ground, Gregory Ormthwaite had pointed out to him the untidy hummock, beneath which all that was mortal—it was hard to think of anything immortal linked with Job Clay—rested, till the earth should give up its dead.

Already the man who was following up the tracks had stood before the mean cottage—little better than a hovel, with sodden thatch roof, crumbling walls, and rickety doors and windows—in which the dead man had dwelt during his short term as a householder. It was in a less desolate condition than when Honor had turned her back upon it.

The window-panes were whole and clean. The light of a fire within was leaping up with a cheerful orange-and-red glow in the gray winter day, and flickering on different articles of furniture. The smell of cooked bacon and beans and the fumes of a man's pipe were in the air. The house was inhabited, and just as it was pointed out to Mr. Ormthwaite a woman's laugh and a baby's crow, answering to a man's bass tones, reached the listener. There never was a less womanish man than Gregory Ormthwaite, yet a lump rose in his throat when he contrasted these tokens with what he knew of Honor's experience there. To think he should grudge what rustic comfort and homely fare there existed to her successor because they had been lacking to her hard-bestead youth! There was no need, he told himself, a little later; it was all over where she was concerned, as he had said to her, as he said again, once and for all. He thanked God for it, humbly and heartily, as he stood beside that other home of witless young Job Clay, where his dust was lying till the Judgment Day, when Christ have mercy on His image, all but obliterated by bestial sin. Job Clay lay beneath the turf as surely as Gregory stood above it, looking down on the sparse and ragged grass. The occupant of the dishonored grave had not attained half the age of the man whose thoughts had been persistently dwelling upon him when he filled up the measure of his iniquities and went to take his wages. He had been, unknown to both of the men, Gregory Ormthwaite's rival. Now he was

forever vanquished, and dismissed to pass before that other tribunal, that Great White Throne, which is too pure for even a good man to face without echoing the publican's prayer—"God, be merciful to me, a sinner."



## VII

No sooner had Ormthwaite returned to Meadowlands than he proceeded to take three or four people into his confidence. The first was Tolley, who was so outraged by the explanation of his master's recent proceedings that he communed with himself for several agitated hours whether he should—not to say give Mr. Ormthwaite his, James Tolley's, leave as servant, but, as it were, give Mr. Ormthwaite his leave as James Tolley's master. But after a severe struggle the battle went the other way. Tolley, who was not above five years older than his master, had come to him as a young lad of fifteen, when the heir of Ormthwaite Manor was a school-boy of ten. The bond between them had existed for too many years, and was too strongly rooted, to be burst even by the instrumentality of a woman, and by Mr. Ormthwaite's cutting his own throat—vulgarly speaking—in contracting an incredible *mésalliance*. There was all the more reason why Tolley should stand by his master, stiff as a poker, making no further sign, and swallowing in magnanimous silence the indignity of having a farm-house servant elevated over his grizzled head as his mistress—the mistress of Ormthwaite Manor! The first time Honor was alone with Tolley after

she knew he had been told, looking into his reproachful eyes, and feeling sure that his long head was grayer than it had been a couple of weeks before, she could not resist begging—

“Mr. Tolley, can you forgive me? It was his doing, his will.”

“Madam,” said Tolley, with as low a bow as if Honor had been a duchess, “I am his servant—and yours.” And she knew by her own heart that wild horses would not draw another word from Tolley on the subject of his master’s low marriage.

Mrs. Marshall was astounded, and, worthy woman though she was, she could not help looking askance at Honor, and bearing her a grudge. Mr. Ormthwaite had been a prime favorite with Mrs. Marshall, and she had maintained that, in place of being simply a country gentleman, wealthy, well descended, and a member of Parliament, he ought to have been at least a baronet if not a baron. And here was her maid, Honor Clay, stepping before her mistress, wedding this real gentleman, with only a narrow escape, according to her mistress’s showing, from being “My Lady.” Mrs. Marshall was tempted to think Mr. Ormthwaite fit for Bedlam, and Honor Clay, whom she had known and trusted for five years, who had always justified her trust, no better than she should be. The roused mortification and jealousy might subside in time, but time was wanted to smooth the troubled waters.

Marshall was neither so amazed nor so indignant. He simply sniggered, and marked off on his stumpy fingers the wise men he had seen bowled over by a

pretty face; and Honor Clay was "a powerful handsome wench," though her good looks were not precisely in the style which Marshall valued most. She was a woman her master could respect. She might have played her cards well in the matter of securing a great marriage for herself, and who could blame her, alone in the world as she seemed to be? But as for any underhand tricks with such a gentleman as Mr. Ormthwaite, who was dealing with her fair and liberal, if a man had suggested such a thing of the pair Marshall would have been inclined to show the offender to the door, or to offer him a taste of the farmer's fists.

But whether hostile or friendly, Mr. Ormthwaite's confederates kept his counsel so well that there was only one idea in the minds of the natives when a female cousin of Mr. Ormthwaite's, a widowed Mrs. Daintrey, appeared on the scene, and it got about that Honor Clay was to leave Meadowlands and go with Mrs. Daintrey. The idea was that, through the recommendation of the gentleman whom she had helped to nurse after his hurt, Honor had been promoted to a new and better servant's situation.

Mrs. Daintrey and Ormthwaite were old and close friends as well as relations. She was a clever woman of some originality. In her youth she had taken the false step of eloping with her drawing-master—possibly *mésalliances* were in the family, like moles under the chin or specially supple thumbs. When the step turned out badly, by the drawing-master failing to prove an old Crome or a

Gainsborough, and by his resenting the circumstance that his wife had ever expected it of him, Mr. Ormthwaite stood by the ill-matched couple, and did something to patch up their differences. He obtained for Daintrey the situation of drawing-teacher in a large school, and undertook the expenses of the education of the boy, the only child of the match, until, just before Daintrey's death, Mrs. Daintrey came into an aunt's fortune, and was restored to the affluent circumstances of her youth, when society was willing to condone her early rebellion, and to receive her once more into its polite circles.

Mr. Ormthwaite knew Mrs. Daintrey would do anything in reason for him. He knew also that she would highly disapprove of his proposed marriage on the first blush of it. But he could not imagine that she would be hard on Honor. His cousin was too liberal-minded and too kind-hearted for that mode of expressing her sentiments. She would bestow the blame in the right quarter, even while she despaired of inducing her old comrade, Gregory, to alter his resolution and go back from his mad engagement. As the second best thing she could do, she would endeavor to mitigate the consequences of the disastrous act which the man, who had been her truest friend in extreme need, was bent on performing, with his eyes open, at forty-five years of age.

Mrs. Daintrey was willing to take Honor under her wing, and go abroad with her until such time as Mr. Ormthwaite's parliamentary duties, which

had lain in abeyance since his accident, were discharged. Then he would join his cousin, and the marriage, which would relieve her of her responsibility, should take place. After it came to the point of an introduction to Honor, Mrs. Daintrey, who was an artist at heart, was struck by the woman's beauty. Her fancy was also tickled, more than she would acknowledge, by the romantic peculiarity of the situation. She, herself, was not a commonplace woman, or one tied down by rule and precedent. All she had suffered had not sufficed to expel the Bohemianism of genius, which was in her blood. Honor bore no resemblance to poor Daintrey, who had been but the picturesque block of an artist, on which a high-spirited, enthusiastic girl could hang her dreams and caprices. Honor, too, was a genius in her way, wise in her silent steadfastness, passionately eager to improve herself, and capable of infinite pains to effect her object, devoted to her middle-aged lover with a pathetic intensity and entireness of devotion.

Mrs. Daintrey was fascinated by the possibilities she saw in her charge. She grew not only interested in her, but attached to her. Thus she backed Honor in her humble but sagacious request, that she might be allowed to stay a little longer with Mrs. Daintrey, training herself and being trained for the post she was to fill.

Mr. Ormthwaite was not an impatient boy, that he should not be able to wait for the reward which he felt would be all the richer and sweeter for the delay. He took a tender pride in Honor's conquest

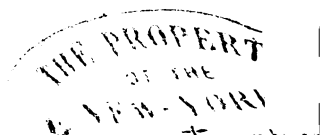
of his cousin, and he considered his future wife could hardly have found a better model than in Hester Daintrey.

Mrs. Marshall, of Meadowlands, had regarded Mrs. Daintrey as ugly and dowdy, and a little cracked in her odd speeches. The rector's wife had known a little better, and had corrected Mrs. Marshall's criticism, explaining to her that Mrs. Daintrey's face was *bizarre*, not ugly, that her plain dress was of excellent material and unobjectionable in style, and that the rector's wife should not wonder though Mr. Ormthwaite's cousin was reckoned a woman of strong sense and pungent wit in the great world.

Mr. Ormthwaite could have said, with authority, that the best houses in town and country were open to Mrs. Daintrey—all the more so that she went little into company, and asked nothing from the leaders of society, and that, whoever looked bored at a London dinner or a country-house breakfast, it was seldom Mrs. Daintrey's partner.

Another year elapsed, and Honor was in her twenty-fifth and Gregory Ormthwaite in his forty-seventh year, when they were quietly married, during the Parliamentary recess, from Mrs. Daintrey's house at Knightsbridge, and went straight home to Ormthwaite Manor, in the Midlands.

Courage, discretion, and abstinence from suspicious mysteries and gratuitous inventions, did wonders in smoothing the way for the Ormthwaites. The first impression Mrs. Ormthwaite made was that of a young woman of great beauty, of a some-



what stately kind, good manners, and quiet self-possession. It was known that she was married to Gregory Ormthwaite from the house of his cousin, Mrs. Daintrey, who came presently to visit the bride and bridegroom, and whose manner towards the bride was of a familiar and affectionate description, as if she had been Mrs. Daintrey's adopted daughter or favorite niece.

The bride's name was Clay—"Honor Clay." To what family of Clays did she belong? The term smelt of the soil, but by one of those coincidences which are not altogether rare there happened to be a county family—Clay of Weston, in Woldshire. Here came in a misconception to which the Ormthwaites lent no assistance, which, in fact, they contradicted, but which, nevertheless, held its ground. Those Clays of Weston, a family with considerable ramifications, did not bear a high character in any of their branches. They were a prodigal, racing, debt-encumbered, and dubious sort of people; the one thing not dubious about them was that they had belonged for generations to the county gentry. When one of the gossips in the Ormthwaite Manor circle contrived to put to Ormthwaite the casual question, Was his wife one of the Weston Clays? he answered, directly, "No; another Clay." A second news-monger managed to approach Mrs. Ormthwaite with the same insidious inquiry, to which she replied, simply, "No," without looking particularly put out.

The husband and wife did not see themselves

called upon to lay bare for public scrutiny that part of their history which concerned her early life ; neither were they such persons as would stoop to endless and highly injudicious fabrications in order to mislead their neighbors. But the very simplicity and brevity of the couple's denial of the lady's having sprung from the Weston Clays, together with the detail that both husband and wife refrained from suggesting any other family of Clays from which she had sprung, produced a peculiar result, which the pair never intended, in baffling the curious public, and putting them on a wrong scent. There was a correct impression that Mr. Ormthwaite had not married either for fortune or family connection ; but he could afford to dispense with either inducement, while Mrs. Ormthwaite's beauty, and what soon appeared to be her singular suitability, where her husband's tastes and habits were considered, amply accounted for his choice. Beyond this conclusion, the genealogists remained obstinately convinced that Mrs. Ormthwaite was practically a Weston Clay. The subdivisions of the original family would enable the Ormthwaites, if disinclined to own the relationship, to repudiate it in the direct line. There were even cousins of the Weston Clays who had gone abroad for not the most creditable reasons ; and Mrs. Ormthwaite had resided abroad, had just come back to England before her marriage. Depend upon it, she was one of these exiled Clays ; and, arguing from Gregory Ormthwaite's high character, it was not surprising that it was his cue to end the whole connection.

I

J



How he got his young wife to consent to give up all her relations at his instigation was more perplexing ; but then, she was young enough to be his daughter, and she studied him, and deferred to him in the most old-fashioned, marvellous manner.

The theory was too vague to be easily dispelled, and Ormthwaite Manor, with the hunting country in which it was situated, was too far away from Woldshire for the grounds of the legend to be thoroughly sifted and the myth dismissed. On the contrary, it came by degrees to be generally accepted ; the sole problem to be solved was how Ormthwaite had carried off an admirable bird from a doubtful nest.

Honor was neither musical nor artistic ; she did not even perpetrate the graphic sketches which Mrs. Daintrey's restless fingers were continually making, careless of who might remember that ages ago the owner of the fingers had run away with her drawing-master, who had remained a drawing-master. Honor did not achieve a single thing worth chronicling with her hands, though they were not entirely idle. Happily for her, the age of pretty, petty feminine accomplishments, even of making a display of a speaking acquaintance with French and German, has gone by. When her visitors found that Mrs. Ormthwaite read her husband's Blue Books, and had more than a superficial acquaintance with the political economy in which he took a deep interest, nothing more was asked from her. Of course, she would not deign to play accompaniments, even though they were difficult

The remarkable thing about Mrs. Ormthwaite was that she was as old-fashioned as her most elegantly accomplished, interestingly helpless predecessor in her relations to her husband. If she hunted—and she was speedily one of the best lady-riders in the county—it was because she rode, a peerless Diana, by Gregory Ormthwaite's side. If she drove, it was because he liked her to take him behind her chestnut ponies. He was fond of scientific farming and forestry, and took a lively interest in his tenant-farmers and cottagers, doing all he could to better their circumstances in these adverse times, and not, as his fellow land-owners were tempted to complain, improving his estate and his tenants off the face of the earth. Mrs. Ormthwaite was equally fond of studying artificial soils, newly introduced roots and seeds, and the latest invented implements. She could tell at a glance the prize oxen and best-bred sheep and pigs. She could point out unerringly which trees should be marked for the thinning of the plantations. She was, from the first, an authority on plans of cottages—which ought to be approved of on account of their adaptability to the wants of the occupants, and which ought to be condemned as wholly impracticable. She knew the business of the vestry and justices meetings, and the quarter sessions,

and could discuss it as intelligently and sympathetically as if she were a member. She did not shoot or fish, because Mr. Ormthwaite disapproved of women shooting or fishing; but she was familiar with the game preserves, and when the head game-keeper's wife failed in rearing young pheasants, Honor took up the task with marked success. Indeed, in her husband's absence she had a vigilant eye on the management of the whole live-stock of the establishment, the horses and dogs, the cattle at the home-farm—all Ormthwaite's hobbies. She graced the luncheons for him and his party at the covert or the brook-side. Withal, she was a perfectly womanly woman.

The alliance with her husband was the same in London. She drove with him at any hour, for the mere love of his company, to the House or to his club. She read all the debates in which he took part, and discussed them with him, till, from the study of native and foreign politics, the two drifted into the study of history, past and present. All the social and humanitarian problems and projects of the period passed under the notice of both, until her mastery of the more serious questions of the day, together with the fresh intelligence and sound understanding she brought to bear on them, could not escape notice. This distinction, combined with her incontestable dignity and beauty, and the influence of her husband's character, and of the stake he held in the country, caused her to be, without seeking it, almost without realizing it, a leader in the circles to which he had raised her.

The chief fault the world had to find with Mrs. Ormthwaite was that she was too serious, too much in earnest for so young and beautiful a woman; that in trifles light as air, which constitute the small-talk and badinage of society, she was left behind. She had even less capacity for it than her husband showed. But the defect did not impair her solid popularity; for that matter, it removed her out of the sphere of rivalry with the many smart, frivolous women who were her contemporaries. Altogether, she was so tolerant to what she had no natural comprehension of, or inclination for—so indulgent to the young, looking on with a smiling, puzzled air at what appeared to her their vagaries, that she had devoted adherents and prostrate admirers, even among the gayest and giddiest. These had come to her begging favors, which it had grieved her, when she could not grant them, more than it had grieved the suppliants whose petitions she had refused. Therefore, the petitioners called her noble—a divinity to their mind.

Mr. Ormthwaite, contemplating his wife's social merits and triumphs, which were to him the least feature in her pre-eminence, compared her in his heart to the Syrian youth, David, who left the sheep-cotes to slay a Goliath and to govern Israel; or to that serf-born Empress of all the Russias, who was found fit to mate with a Tzar, and to wield as his successor a sceptre whose sway extends from Siberia to the Caucasus.

## VIII

THE servants at Ormthwaite Manor were, for the most part, old confidential servants, like Tolley, or they were young servants under the control of their seniors. One and all of them knew a good mistress when they had got her—a mistress liberal, kind, considerate, and as unexact as if, instead of being a beggar raised to the office of a porter, she was a porter by long descent. Not a tongue in the servants' hall wagged against Mrs. Ormthwaite. If there was the faintest suspicion among these domestic Fouchés whom we keep under our roofs that her circumstances had not always been as they then were, not a voice ventured to assert it above the owner's breath, not even when stragglers of visitors of a humble class appeared now and again and asked to see Mrs. Ormthwaite. If the lady of the house had no relations who sought her out, she had certainly friends among the lower orders who found their way to her. After all, Woldshire was not so far distant from Ormthwaite Manor, and the hypothesis of the woman and child drowned in the marl-pit had been long before set at rest by the draining of the pit, and the absence of any trace of the lost pair. Ormthwaite Manor was still nearer to the large manufacturing town to which Honor's

father and brothers and sisters had repaired. In either case, it was possible for waifs and strays from her youth, moved by that stupendous lever, self-interest, to track out, in course of time, the woman who had risen in the ranks, and to seek to profit by her great fortunes.

Honor's father did not come to her, though he was supposed to send various indirect messages and appeals through sons and daughters who contrived to make the journey.

So, too, the village of Hayes contributed its quota, who had struggled out of their way to try if they could not benefit by old associations, by hints of damaging disclosures, unless the hinters became hangers-on in the wake of the great lady who had, not so very long ago, been an acquaintance of theirs. All these visitors, who were of a pronounced type, were received, were in a manner welcomed, and got what they came for. They were all dealt with in exactly the same manner. They were ushered into the servants' hall, where Tolley, on his own responsibility, stood sponsor for the new-comers, as "people from Mrs. Ormthwaite's place"—modern substitutes for feudal retainers. There was no concealment attempted about them. After they had been civilly attended to, and hospitably refreshed, these uninvited guests, with the awe of the great establishment and of the courtesy with which they were treated still closing their mouths and keeping their faces in order, were taken to the morning-room, which Mrs. Ormthwaite used as her private sitting-room. There she talked to them, and heard

all they had to tell of themselves and their neighbors, with whom she had been familiar of old. Finally, they were understood to depart with substantial gratuities from her private purse, which had its origin in the ample allowance Mr. Ormthwaite had settled on his wife at the time of their marriage. She had never gone beyond that allowance, neither had she hoarded it. The faces of the departing guests might be a little blank and bewildered sometimes, but they shone more or less with satisfaction.

As for Mrs. Ormthwaite, she sat regarding their withdrawal without a throb of fear or a twinge of conscience. She had grown accustomed to the situation and hardened to it, in her consciousness of being established beyond the possibility of uprootal in her husband's affections, in the rights he had given her as his wife, and in the esteem of her neighbors. She was not at all apprehensive that any malicious revelation from the intruders could do her an injury. What could hurt her, an innocent woman, backed by her husband's love and trust, and doing her duty to the best of her ability, so as to earn the respect of great and small? She did not believe that even Mr. Ormthwaite would be much vexed by an echo of what was an old story now—a story which he and she had not striven to hide, farther than by the decent reticence which they felt bound to preserve, in consideration of the prejudices of others, while they had been guiltless of any false pretences, which might, at some unforeseen moment, collapse and cover them with confusion.

Honor was not perfect. Her devotion to her husband blunted her to the incongruity of her behavior to her brothers and sisters. Apart from her absorption in him, there was no coarse fibre in her nature which could have rendered her callous to the disparity she consented to accentuate between her and them, by classing them with her servants. It was not because the servants were, as far as Honor could guess, ignorant of the truth, or because she had been separated from her family since her early girlhood, and was practically a stranger to them—to the heavily built, thick-of-speech journeyman wright, and to the blowsy, bashful wife of the mechanic, who claimed her as belonging to them. It was simply that she regarded them as less than nothing to Gregory Ormthwaite. They were her brothers and sisters—she did not deny that—but they were not his kindred; his raising her to his rank did not give them part or lot in him, or in Ormthwaite Manor. The servants' hall was far beyond what they were accustomed to, or had any right to expect.

When Ormthwaite came into the house after one of these visits, Honor would casually allude to her brother and her sister having been to see her, and to their staying to have dinner in the servants' hall before they left. Then the master of the house would exclaim in some disturbance of mind :

“I suppose Tolley took them in tow, and looked after them. But, my dear, was it right to have them there? Should they not have had dinner by



themselves in the library—that is, of course, if you did not care to lunch with them?”

Positively she did not understand what he referred to—one of the rare occasions when she missed his meaning.

“I am sure they were quite comfortable,” she told him, sincerely—“at least, as comfortable as they could be, so much out of place. Tolley would take care that the other servants conducted themselves properly. I gave Alf ten pounds to get lessons in ornamental wood-work, which he thinks he could do. I dare say he could; I remember he was neat-handed as a small boy. I gave him other ten for father, to buy him a new overcoat and to spend as he likes on the second family. Then I thought Sue had better have a third check for ten, because her husband is out of work, and she is looking forward to her confinement. I told her to get some one to write to me when the baby was born, and I would let her have more money if her husband had not been taken on at another foundry. I don’t think it would be wise to put much into their hands at once—do you, Gregory?”

“You should know best, Honor,” he said, looking at her in a kind of marvelling way.

“I assure you they were quite satisfied.”

“I dare say they were,” he replied, dryly. He was always tickled by the simplicity and straightforwardness, dashed with shrewdness, which remained distinguishing traits of his wife; and he was of opinion that the gulf between her and her

relations, however it came about, whether by her doing or his, was a blessing to both.

Eventually, a visitor arrived for Honor who would not sit down in the servants' hall, with regard to whom Tolley, declining to employ another servant on the errand, came to Honor in the morning-room, and said, stolidly :

"There is a person asking for you, madam. I invited her to sit down and have some cold meat, as the servants' dinner was over, and Mrs. Burrows would have made her a cup of tea, if she would have nothing else. But she wishes to be taken to you at once."

"Then bring her here, Tolley," said Mrs. Ormthwaite composedly. "I am not particularly engaged this afternoon ; I have not to go to meet your master at the station till six o'clock. Who is the person ? Did she say whether she came from Hayes or from Leadminster ?"—naming the town in which her father was settled.

"She did not name either place," said the imperturbable Tolley. "I did not get her address, and I am not aware that she has ever been here before."

"Well, the matter will soon be explained if you will send her here," remarked Mrs. Ormthwaite with a slight yawn, for she had been out all the morning overlooking an alteration which Mr. Ormthwaite was having made in the lower garden terrace. Because he cared about it she had come to care, in what she was inclined to tell herself, laughingly, was a ridiculous manner.

It was the Easter recess, and everything about the place and the park was in full spring beauty. The trees still showed their delicate wintry tracery, brushed with tender green buds and bursting leaves. The moss and the bracken beneath the trees still presented their broad contrast of golden brown and vivid emerald, while the fruit-trees in the orchard were breaking out into shell-white and coral-red blossom. The scent of the old-fashioned wallflower which Ormthwaite favored, and of the early stocks in sheltered nooks, mingled with the incense from the violet-beds. These shamed the rows of tulips and clumps of polyanthuses and auricula, which in their rainbow and velvety splendor offered no such tribute to their admirers. The flute notes of the first blackbirds of the season rose above the orchestra of smaller birds trilling from a huge laurustinus bush at an angle of the terrace. Honor, seated on the broad window-seat, had been wondering with idle regret how she and Gregory Ormthwaite could tear themselves away from all the sweetness of late spring and early summer in their country home, in order to occupy a hired house in a wilderness of brick and mortar, called London, which, to be sure, had its own unapproachable attractions, when you were immersed in them. But you had to pay for them by a yearly wrench from other good things, whose value was not sufficiently appreciated till you had to relinquish them.

Honor was passionately attached to the manor-house, every stone of which was intimately associated with her husband and his people for more gen-

erations than she cared to reckon. She was fond of every room in the house—the great drawing-room, which was kept for company; the ball-room, which was still more a state apartment, and not danced in above once or twice a year; the dining-room, to which critics objected as dark and old-fashioned, but which was solid and stately; the library, which was Gregory's room. Her feet trod its Turkey carpet many times a day, yet she knew their lightest tread was listened for, and greeted with heartfelt satisfaction. How could she have borne to believe that her husband's regard for her had died a natural death, and that she was not now and always his dearest possession, for which he had dared the world's censure, and risked the doubtful question of her growth from an ignorant, undisciplined servant-girl, to be, even at the distance at which she always held herself beneath him, his fit companion and friend? Why, her very delight in the morning-room she had made her own was that he came straight to it every time he entered the house. She sometimes lingered there for the very pleasure of having him seek her out the first thing always. Though the room was styled a morning-room, he would, when the couple were by themselves, desert his library and the smaller drawing-room, where guests and visitors were wont to congregate, in order to repair to his wife's room, just because traces of her and her occupations were to be found on all sides. It was not a very luxurious room—Honor had not a taste for gorgeous upholstery—neither was it particularly

æsthetic, since her acquaintance with nineteenth-century æstheticism had begun too late for its mistress to have a craze on the subject. It was simply a pretty, comfortable room, furnished in light wood and cretonne, with pictures Honor and her husband had fancied and bought at various exhibitions and artists' sales, low, well-filled book-cases, lounging-chairs at every angle, a choice of reading-lamps, a flower-stand, a work-table, an afternoon tea-table, soft rugs, etc.

It was into this room that a woman in a woollen gown of the last conspicuous plaid pattern, a black silk bugle-trimmed jacket too tight for the stout wearer, and a hat decorated with artificial poppies and cornflowers, was shown.

"Lyddy Atkins! Cousin Lyddy!" exclaimed Mrs. Ormthwaite, rising quickly to meet her visitor. She, on her part, paused in advancing, to take a comprehensive look round her before she accepted the hand of the mistress of the house, and dropped into the chair which struck her as best calculated to bear her weight and afford her ease.

"Sure enough it do be Cousin Lyddy, not to be set at nought and trampled upon by none of your sassy gentry of men-servants, Honor Clay!"

Lyddy was determined to assert herself, but she was not really angry. She had no great respect for her fellow-creatures in any rank of life, but she was equally thick-skinned where her own claims were concerned. She was impelled to cry out the next moment:

"My word, you have done well for yoursen; you

'ave carried your hogs to a fine market ! And who 'ave you to thank for your promotion but me and 'enry Atkins, as 'eard on the place for you down in Cleeveshire, where you fell in wi' your grand bargain ?"

## IX

HONOR's first sensation at the revival of an old familiar face and voice which she had lost sight of in the lapse of years, until the peculiarities of the owner were forgotten, was an irresistible feeling of amusement. She was more struck than of old by Lyddy's loud, ill-assorted dress, her bounce and vulgarity; but, with the larger tolerance Honor had learned, she was tickled rather than shocked. However, she would not have laughed out at Lyddy for the world. She said, gently:

"Have you come all the way from Burntwood to see me, Cousin Lyddy? That was good of you! But you must not think for a moment that any servant belonging to Mr. Ormthwaite meant to trample upon you. It is simply that in a house like this there are rules for the servants. They are accustomed to put any stranger they do not know, who does not send in a name, either into the business room or the servants' hall."

"You 'ave soon begun to teach me manners, ma'am, likewise the 'abits of gentlefolks 'ouses," said Lyddy, rising from her seat to make a bob of a courtesy; but when she had done so she was so pleased with what she considered her witty retort to the liberty taken with her that her good-humor

was entirely restored. She started afresh on an inspection of her surroundings, walking round the room, fingering the stuff of the curtains, poking the couches, turning round the chairs as if she expected to find their price on the back. A nearer view either modified her first opinion or confirmed her in her determination to take down what she regarded as Honor's conceit. "My! Honor, it ain't half as splendiferous as I thought—no more than your gownd, as is only *de laine* at not above a shilling the yard, I'll go bail. I looked to see you rustling in silks and satins, with velvet hangings and sofars. Lord! there ain't a lace curtain, or a hanti-macassar or two, or nothing worth in the place. Hanti-macassars, fresh from the wash and well starched, smartens up a room wonderful, 'ides 'oles and stains, and give everything a happle-pie look. I'd recommend them; they're to be had cheap at every draper's. But, sew-er-ly, Honor, this ain't your best room?"

"Oh no," answered Honor, with a laugh; "this is only my snuggery."

Lyddy nodded her comprehension. "Where you keeps your soiled odds and ends, and does your dirty jobs; but I don't see no mess about."

"No; I am afraid Mr. Ormthwaite would not relish messes, and there is no occasion to make them here. You'll be shown over the house, if you like. But now, tell me how your husband is, how you have been yourself, and what I can do for you."

For, to tell the truth, Mrs. Lyddy Atkins, with



all her apparent energy, was an indolent woman at bottom. Honor knew, unless Lyddy had been stirred up by a strong motive, she would not have put herself about to journey as far as Ormthwaite Manor. She had been in regular communication with Honor from the date of her marriage, already five years back, which was one reason for Mrs. Lyddy's passively yielding to her natural indolence. A considerable accession to Henry Atkins's intermittent earnings had reached his wife in quarterly instalments, paid punctually. She had actually been tempted to "pay her way" more than once. There had been no pressing cause for her to quit Burntwood and remove to a new quarter of long credit. An underhand current of cunning in her impudent composition had hitherto chimed in with her indolence, and suggested to her to "let well alone," take the good gifts fortune sent her, and not seek out Honor in her high estate. A not extraordinary crisis of adverse circumstances had brought the period of inaction to a close, and Lyddy was there.

"I am sorry to 'ave to tell you, 'enry is only so-so. He ain't so young as he 'as been, and he finds it 'ard on him to carry on two callin's."

"But could he not give up public speaking?" Honor ventured to say, with a comical realization of 'enry's florid, frothy, rabid harangues, in contrast with Gregory Ormthwaite's sane, sober-minded moderation, and careful study of facts and consequences in his cultured speeches.

"I won'er to 'ear you!" cried Lyddy, in indignant

protest. "If 'enry 'ave the gift of speechifyin' in him, it's for some hend; you ain't goin' to deny that? And what for should he put his gift under a bushel, as Bible says, any more than your man, or any other of them swells as gets into Parliament to up'old their order, though they cannot 'old the candle to the likes of 'enry in what they have got to say and how they says it? What he has to say, he means to say with his dying breath—he allus 'olds to that. He 'ave tried to be taken on as a paid speaker, but the pay don't go down with the folk he addresses. They've got it into their stoopid 'eads as he's making a living off them when he's paid, and won't go no more to 'ear him."

"It seems a difficult problem," answered Honor, dubiously.

"It is 'ard on me, any'ow," complained Lyddy, with the nearest approach to a whimper Honor had ever happened to hear from her stout-hearted, complacent kinswoman's lips. "There ain't 'alf the money coming in there was wont to be, while 'enry and me is growing older every day, and more in need of comforts. He 'ave started a bad leg this last winter, and I ain't sure as I'm not gettin' the water in my hinside—same as mother 'ad, for the last three year of her life."

"I hope not; I think not," Honor sought to reassure the sufferer. "You look as hale and ruddy as when I last saw you."

She glanced down courageously at the solid fat of the figure, and the hardy beet-root tint of the face beside her.

"Oh, them as 'as the water allus keeps their color," Lyddy explained, "and, in course, is as plump as pigeons. I 'ave fallen off, for all that. This gownd wouldn't 'ave met on me a year agone, no more would this 'ere jacket. That reminds me—would you believe it, Honor? Crowther, as I 'ave dealt with all them years, never going past his shop, 'aggled at letting me 'ave them things, unless I lifted more off the bill. The draper as I 'ave allus employed and recommended right and left! Folks is oongrateful. If it were not for the trifle of money you sends me, nows and thens, 'enry and me would be fair 'ard up, many's the time."

"I am sorry to hear it," said Honor, still more gravely, turning over in her mind whether it would be right—that is, just and prudent—to increase this woman's already sufficient allowance, and so convert her into an insatiable parasite and cormorant.

"I did you a good turn more than oncet," urged Lyddy, as if she were answering what was passing through Honor's mind, while she was by no means anxious to keep her title to be heard in the background.

"I know you did, Lyddy," admitted Honor, readily; "and you had all the trouble of the baby's illness and death, though I sent you what I could out of my wages at the time, to defray the necessary expenses. Indeed, I have not forgotten."

"I'm glad to hear it," said Lyddy, not without a shade of offence. "It ain't altogether like it, I must say. You are perlite. Oh yes, very perlite,

Honor Clay or O'mthwaite—I cannot just say your fine name as glib as might be, for I hav'n't 'eard it, and it hasn't been on my lips that often—but you ain't so 'earty or ready to 'elp a old friend as one would have thought. Ten years is a long time to bear in mind favors received. If the babby as I had grown main fond on—so as poor owd Punch got his nose put out of jint—'ad lived, her would be a little gal of more'n ten.” She stopped short in her flow of words, and a strange cross-light came into her small, glancing eyes. She was silent for a minute, and then she broke out excitedly, “I'll make a clean breast on it, Honor. I 'ave kep' the secret long enough, and it's little thanks I'm like to get for it, I see. The chile is a gal nigh eleven year; she's no more dead and buried than you be or I be.”

“What do you say, Lyddy Atkins?” demanded Honor, rising up tall and stern, with her color blanching, for her heart was standing still, but with no other sign of emotion.

“I means what I says!” cried Lyddy Atkins, rising to her feet also, with the words tumbling over each other in her flurried haste to get through with the task she had undertaken. “The bairn is all alive and kicking—not a big gal for her age, but 'ealthy, and more'n ten year owd, as I 'ave said.”

“Then what on earth made you write to me that she was dead?” remonstrated Honor, sitting down again, because, even in that strong young womanhood of hers, her limbs trembled so that they could not support her. They trembled before a vision

of Job Clay's child and hers, growing up under Lyddy Atkins's influence. This little girl was not like Honor's other relations. She was bone of her bone and flesh of her flesh, a part of herself; a being she had brought into the world, to be happy or miserable, a blessing or a curse to all connected with her, whom she could not cast off without the world's crying shame on her, as an unnatural mother, a creature without heart or conscience.

"If you will 'ave the outs and ins of the story, happen I'm to give you them. It was like this," said Lyddy more deliberately, subsiding into a sing-song narrative after she had pulled herself together and called all her forces to her aid. "I 'ad growed fond on the chile, as I 'ave told you. I 'ad got it chrissened 'Lyddy Atkins,' after your poor mother and me, and it went again the grain wi' me to be allus sponging on you, a servant-gal, for her keep, as cost little in them days—her bottle of milk, pretty dear! and a rusk or two when her teeth began to come. 'enry and me were in ooncommon easy circumstances just at that time. He 'ad a buildin' job as he stuck to rare and constant, and it were like to last him for years. I said to mysen, says I, 'Why should I sponge on that poor wench for baby's bite and her clothes, as is an amusement to me to look after? Poor Honor will not be able to lay by a penny again a rainy day. Her don't want the bairn, bless you! her would be right down thankful to be rid on the innocent. Why should little Lyddy Atkins not be Lyddy Atkins to the end of the chapter? It is our name, and there

ain't nowt to hinder she from bein' ours, only Honor might 'ave a dither about throwing her on us for good. She's that noble spirited—is Honor. She would not suffer the likes of we to be cumbered with Job Clay's bairn and hers, without a consideration; her 'ave said that from the first, when her 'ad not a 'ole to shelter her, or a penny in her purse."

"You might have put the question to me," said Honor, bitterly, still half dazed with the shock she had sustained.

"Well, I might," owned Lyddy, candidly; "but would that 'ave mended matters? You would still 'ave 'eld it a mean trick to 'ave turned the hinfant over on me and 'enry for a constancy. Weren't it kinder, if 'enry agreed, to say it were took bad suddent—too suddent for you to be fetched—and were a gone coon, like its father was, in no time? Then you'd 'ave no further thought and care about the chile, and the money you thought fit to send for her bur'l would be the last you'd ever 'ave to pay. You'll not contradict me that it were a great weight off your mind when you 'eard the lamb were gone?"

Honor did not contradict the special pleader.

"There might 'ave been another reason," resumed Lyddy, "if it do not anger you more to 'ear it, as you appear to be angered a'ready, and me seekin' to serve and spare you," the speaker asserted in an injured tone.

"What reason?" inquired Honor, with stiff rigidity.

“Why, Honor, I did think, if I took the bairn for mine and ’enry’s, and reared her, it would be queer justice that you should be able to step in any minent the fancy struck you and carry her hoff from me—you as ’ad never looked over your shoulder at her when you set off for Meadowlands to fill the place as ’enry found for you. I do believe I were a bit jealous when I planned to deceive you,” ended Lyddy, with a suspicion of waggish archness in her voice.

“Why did you not speak out when I wrote and told you of my marriage?” insisted Honor, with the dull flatness of despair in her voice.

“What! spile your great match?” cried Lyddy, energetically. “What do you take me for? I were never a one to do my worst enemy—let alone a friend like you—such a hugly turn. Your gent took you without a ’cumbrance. Would he ’ave been as like to come forrard if there had been a chile, another man’s chile, standing atween you?”

Honor, self-controlled as she had learned to be, bent her head and hid her face, with an involuntary, low, quivering cry, such as might burst from an animal stabbed to the heart.

Lyddy Atkins was far too easy-going and good-natured a woman, in a careless way, to stand the exhibition of feeling unmoved. She was clearly put out and vexed by the sight and sound.

“Why do you take on so?” she asked, impatiently. “I ain’t going to split upon you, and that you can judge for yoursen. I ’aven’t brought the chile here. Let her stay where she is. I desire

nawt better. I 'ave no objection, no, nor 'enry neither. I'm used to her; more'n that, I'm main fond on she, though her don't favor you or your mother's family one bit. Her takes after her scuff of a father; her's a Clay, every inch on her. But she can't 'elp that, now, can she? We don't 'ave the making of ourselves, do us, Honor? I'm willin' to keep her as I 'ave done all along; only I 'aven't knowed what to think. I've been in as many minds about her as there is days in the week. I've thought you oughtn't to 'ave been misled. That notion 'ave growed on me and been in mind often of late, when 'enry and me 'ave been straitened in our means, as I 'ave told you. The cost of maintaining the gal 'ave growed with her growth. She do 'ave a appetite, Honor, and you would not 'ave her stinted in her victuals and her growin'?"

"Where is she?" asked Honor, with dry lips and a dry tongue, which would scarcely articulate the words.

"Now where should she be?" cried Lyddy, reproachfully, and yet with returning briskness akin to cheerfulness. "Where, but keepin' 'ouse for 'enry in my absence? Though her's a Clay, every inch on her, her ain't so oonlike you, Honor, that she haven't a spry side to her, as the 'mericans say. She can tidy, with a neighbor's 'elp, and toast a rasher, and mix 'enry's glass of gin-and-water, and fill his pipe, and spend her arfpenny so as to get a pennyworth for it, like any owd woman."

A dead silence followed. It was broken by Lyddy's crying out, in genuine agitation—



"You ain't thinkin' of turnin' on me, Honor? You ain't goin' to rob us of the little gal? You ain't meanin' to send over to Burntwood to lay 'old on her bodily, and ship her over the seas, where, as I 'ave 'eard tell, childer as ain't wanted are sent, and never 'eard on again?"

"Hush, Lyddy!" said Honor, and the hoarseness of anguish was in her voice.

Lyddy, undaunted and irrepressible, as it was her nature to be, heard and obeyed. A certain fear of the woman, who sat like a stone while a tempest was raging within her, crept over Lyddy Atkins.

The vision which Lyddy's first words of confession had called up before Honor was taking shape and substance, and usurping possession of her. It was Job Clay's child and hers, who favored the father and the Clays, who had been brought up for these ten years or more by the chattering, cheating, unprincipled woman before her. And this precocious nursling of the Atkinses was equal to the congenial performance of mixing Henry Atkins's gin-and-water—to be paid, no doubt, with a drop out of his glass, after she had been sufficiently applauded for her cleverness in contriving to get a penny's worth for her halfpenny. Was this child—peasant-born and worse than peasant-bred—to be imposed at this date on Gregory Ormthwaite? He would not repudiate the undreamed-of burden, though it might come in time to burn like fire in his bones, filling him with disgust and shame. He would not suffer Honor to put it away

from her. He was too righteous, too manly, too careful of the rights of every living creature. He would take up this incubus, though it should make him and Honor, after all these years, a scoff and scorn to their neighbors, to their very servants. This was to be Honor's miserable return for all Gregory Ormthwaite's unexampled goodness to her !

“Cousin Lyddy,” said Mrs. Ormthwaite abruptly, pressing her finger-tips into her palms, “since you adopted the child at your own risk, imposing upon me an account of its death, you may keep it, and it may be yours for—for always. What will you take for the support of the little girl, to bring her up in her station, honestly, if you can? I never meant the money I have been in the habit of allowing you to stand for what people call ‘hush money,’ since there was nothing which mattered to be hushed up. I am aware that what I am proposing now is altogether different. I will give you double, treble what you have had hitherto if you will not suffer a word of what you have said to me this afternoon to pass your lips to any other person, and if you will consent to this young ‘Lyddy Atkins’”—she could not quite hide the repugnance with which she repeated the name—“living on with you and your husband as your daughter. I suppose you have had her so long that the people about you, the people you know, are accustomed to view her in that light, and do not take notice or ask questions?”

“They ain’t likely at this time of the day,” de-

clared Lyddy, with restored confidence. "More'n that, though 'enry and me are still at Burntwood, us is at the hopposite end of the town from where we was when you were there. We 'ave never cared to keep a trail of owd acquaintances at our 'eels. If it be any comfort to you to 'ear it, I can say that I do not think as there is a friend as comes about us where we are now as does not count little Lyddy our very own chile. It was foolish of me, I dessay, but I rather liked to give 'em that impression when us arrived as strangers in the part, and 'enry did not stop to contradict me. I'll do my very best, Honor, to meet your views, and I'm wishing nowt, oonreasonable, nowt of the nature of a bribe, to keep the little gal as is like my own flesh and blood, no more'n a consideration for her growing up and for 'enry and me growing old, and no longer fit to do what we would like by her."

The bargain was struck; and so engrossed were the bargain-makers with it that they forgot—even Lyddy forgot—that she had not tasted food or drink in her cousin's house, and that she was not shown over it, as Honor promised she might be if she chose.

Tolley, in his turn, got a surprise. Mrs. Ormthwaite not only conducted the visitor to the hall door; she put on her garden-hat, which she had left on the hall table, and accompanied the woman down the avenue. And Mrs. Ormthwaite came back walking slowly and looking tired. She went to her room, and for the first time since Tolley had known her as the mistress of Ormthwaite Manor she forgot that she was to meet the squire at the

station. When Tolley sent up to remind her of the arrangement she returned the message to him to order the dog-cart, go himself, and to tell his master she had overtired herself, and had lain down with a headache which would be gone by dinner-time.

As for Lyddy Atkins, she betrayed no fatigue, in spite of the increasing years and infirmities on which she had dilated to Honor. Mrs. Atkins walked to the very station at which Mr. Ormthwaite was expected to arrive with the unwonted elasticity and superiority to bodily weariness which is only imparted by some lively and abiding source of elation. She kept telling herself while she went along, as if to stifle every doubt, "We 'elped 'er when 'er were in low water. Us freed her from her clog and got her the place. Withouten that, where was her grand match, her fine 'ouse, and her carriage as she offered me a cast in—she came to that, for all her proud stomach—to spring from? It were all my doin' and 'enry's. Her owes us more than her 'as ever paid. Her brought it on hersen by her stinginess and her 'aughtiness. Her as Job Clay brought down to the dirt to heaven me—as allus kep' myself up—to sit down with her bowin' and scrapin' trash of servants—set-up slaveys, as 'enry's been flyin' out at, and biddin' be men, for a score of years! I'm wronging nobry, and Honor will never miss the money as will keep us comfortable. Little Lyddy Atkins"—she gave a cackle of a laugh at the thought—"will be a deal the better of it, and her ain't far to seek."

## X

THERE was one thing in which Mrs. Ormthwaite had failed her husband—she had brought him no heir; a failure which was the more to be regretted since the second cousin, who was likely to be the squire's successor at the manor, was understood to be a distinctly inferior specimen of the genus county gentry.

In the earlier years of the Ormthwaites' married life the absence of children did not seem to be greatly felt by the couple, who, in their Darby-and-Joan attachment, were only the more closely united because no small interlopers interfered with their joint pursuits. But as time wore on the deprivation appeared to prey on Mrs. Ormthwaite's mind till she became changed in many respects. She was no longer the interestingly large-minded woman, with perfect poise of intellect and emotion, and the freedom—remarkable in one young and beautiful—from petty, personal sensibilities and vanities. She had ceased to be altogether the agreeable companion, especially to men and women of her husband's set, which her tranquillity, her good sense, the large stock she could claim of the intelligence and information they most prized, had rendered her. She had grown preoccupied, like so

many of her sex, liable to fits of abstraction, if they did not amount to difficult moods, inconveniently nervous.

To those who were intimately acquainted with Honor Ormthwaite's home life there was a still greater and more regrettable alteration in her. The peaceful equanimity under conditions which, to a woman less strong in her simplicity, must have been extremely trying, had deserted her. In its place was a vigilant watchfulness which kept her harassed and left her exhausted. She had been distinguished by a frank, fearless acceptance of whatever destiny might bring her; it had brought her such a glorious endowment, such fairy gifts, that she could trust it implicitly for whatever the future had in store for her. She had shown a cheerful coolness amounting to nonchalance with regard to the accidents of life. In its room was an unslumbering, restless scrutiny of all who approached her, resulting in her being painfully on her guard, until she acquired the unhappy air of one who is constantly looking out for evil tidings with the desperate determination to ward them off while there was the opportunity.

The treatment of poor ineligible relations and acquaintances turning up at Ormthwaite Manor was reversed, and that entirely by Mrs. Ormthwaite's instrumentality. They were no longer committed to Tolley and confidently deposited in the servants' hall; they were taken at once to have the interview they sought with the mistress of the house; then they were bundled out hastily beyond its borders, some-

what to the bewilderment of those who had made previous visits. But the visitors' faces continued to shine, for Mrs. Ormthwaite's purse-strings continued to relax feverishly as well as freely.

As time went on Honor had to confess in manifest shame and distress to her husband that she could no longer keep within the bounds of her allowance. The confession took him a little by surprise, but his trust in her was so perfect that he received the tale with no more than the gentlest of warnings, followed by the smiling indulgence of the consolatory speech, "Never mind, my dear! There is more money where the other came from, in spite of the bad times. On the whole, you need not reproach yourself with being too extravagant a wife. I'll instruct Baker to make an addition to your income."

He was the last to see the transformation in her, because he was the last person whom it affected, since the aim of her life was to be the same to him. When he did notice a change he attributed it to a breakdown in her magnificent health. Yes, even she had to admit at last that her health was giving way. Nothing could be clearer, though the why and the wherefore were not so easily accounted for. The burden of her social duties at the head of his establishments in the town and country had grown so oppressive that she caught eagerly at the prospect of a lengthened stay abroad, even though she was aware that it would interfere with all Ormthwaite's previous arrangements, and with the plan of life he had chalked out for himself, and been

hitherto free to follow. The remedy for Mrs. Ormthwaite's breakdown was partially successful; but it irked a man of Gregory Ormthwaite's active mind and tender conscience to continue idle, so that the idea occurred to him of presently substituting, where his wife was concerned, a change instead of an intermission of obligations. He was a man of acknowledged ability. He had served his political party long and faithfully, and it was understood that a recognition of his services was awaiting him. He signified to his chiefs, who were then in office, that in preference to a minor place which might fall vacant in the cabinet, he would not be unwilling to accept a governorship in the colonies. Without much loss of time he had the governorship of a fair-sized island in a salubrious climate placed at his disposal. When he saw how Mrs. Ormthwaite roused herself at the proposal, how proud she was of his additional rank and authority—in the light of an honor which was his due, to be amply vindicated by his faithful discharge of a governor's functions—he felt rewarded for the sacrifice, for his heart was at Ormthwaite Manor.

Before Sir Gregory—he had received a baronetcy—embarked manfully on the fresh enterprise, during the couple's flying visit home to set their house in order, as a prelude to leaving it behind them for an indefinite time, Lady Ormthwaite profited by her husband's absence on official business in London to take a railway journey, and, in spite of her delicate health, she was unattended either by her maid or by Tolley. She was only to be away for a few hours, she



said, in answer to the respectful remonstrances made to her, and she could manage by herself for that time. She kept her word ; she left after breakfast, and she was back before dinner. She had said openly that her destination was Leveridge, a village in the vicinity of Burntwood, though she had given no further explanation of her errand. Her maid, Ditton, was convinced, by the short time her mistress stayed, that she could not have left the village station. She must either have changed her mind, and simply waited to return by the next train, or she must have met by appointment the person she had gone to see—possibly the under-housekeeper who had been recommended as an assistant to Mrs. Burrows, left in charge of the diminished household staff during the family's absence. Yet why the under-housekeeper could not come all the way to the manor, in place of a delicate lady in Lady Ormthwaite's position travelling half the distance to meet her, was more than Ditton could tell. All she could say was that she was certain her mistress had taken no luncheon, had not even unfastened the sable collar and thick veil which Ditton had with her own fingers, as a protection against the cold of a winter's day, clasped round Lady Ormthwaite's throat, and tied in a particular knot at the back of her hat. Ditton was sure her master, who was careful of her mistress's health, would be put out when he heard of the rash expedition. Sir Gregory did not hear of it for many a day, and Ditton was, for the most part, wrong in her surmises.

Lady Ormthwaite did not stop at Leveridge sta-

tion. She walked much faster than she had strength for the half-mile between her and one of the suburbs of Burntwood. She looked about her hastily for the name of a special street, then turned into a third-rate grocer's shop. She asked the grocer, who was leaning idly against his counter, reading a newspaper a scrap at a time, if he knew a family called "Atkins," who lived somewhere near. Yes, indeed! The grocer, who was an open-hearted man, confessed to the knowledge with a shake of his head. Most of the tradesmen in the neighborhood were familiar with the Atkinses, to their—the tradesmen's—cost. He had the misfortune to make the Atkinses' acquaintance several years before. They had been down in his books ever since, and he was blessed if he could see a shilling of their money. They were a shifty lot. He would not advise the lady—at whom he looked hard—to have anything to do with them.

"Yes—no," the lady replied. All she wanted to hear was if the husband and wife had a girl—a daughter of twelve or thirteen—who lived with them?

Yes, they had, a fair-haired slip of a girl; he had seen her only the other day. She had been in the habit of running in for things—the best Dorset butter, prime Belfast ham, newly laid eggs, and freshly made preserves, if you please!—as though the family were rolling in wealth, so long as he would let her take them on. She was a daughter or niece, he could not remember which, and bore the same name.

Could he tell the inquirer where she would find the nearest fly to take her at once to Leveridge station?

There were no flies to be had just at hand, but if a cab would do there was a stand two corners off, and it would be no trouble in the world for his boy to fetch for the lady, who he could see was ready to drop, a 'ansom or a growler.

Thus this little episode, this single attempt to sift Lyddy Atkins's story, began and ended.

After four years' highly creditable and fairly prosperous exercise of his powers, Sir Gregory Ormthwaite resigned his governorship. He desired to return with Lady Ormthwaite to England, and settle down once more, for good and all, at home. He was actuated by two reasons. He was in his sixtieth year. His health and strength had not failed. The terrible accident in the hunting-field, which made him a prisoner at Meadowlands for so many weeks—weeks destined to influence his whole future life—had left no bad physical effects. Nowhere could there be found a more excellent specimen of an elderly English gentleman, well-preserved by an honorable life of temperance in all, save, perhaps, manly ambition, and of usefulness in his station, rather than by the skill of the physician or the arts of the quack. Still, Sir Gregory was sensible that he was growing old—not merely elderly—and he longed, with a great longing, to spend his last years and die where his fathers had lived and died before him, among the faces and scenes with which all his youth and early manhood were inextricably intertwined.

The second reason was even more imperative than the first. While Lady Ormthwaite's health remained precarious, her condition had culminated in the revival of a long-delayed hope, too precious to be risked for any cause save the paramount claim of duty, or to be cherished to fruition in any other quarter than that of Ormthwaite Manor.

Some difficulty connected with the transfer of the governorship delayed the ex-governor's departure from his island after it was desirable that Lady Ormthwaite should make the journey. Accordingly, she preceded him under the honorary guardianship of the senior secretary and the practical care of Tolley & Ditton, and arrived at the manor. Her friends and neighbors were ready to welcome her back with effusion and with hearty congratulations; but, in her weakness and her apprehension of the danger in which she stood, she could not avail herself of their cordiality. She missed, as she had not done since her marriage, fourteen years before, the presence of Mrs. Daintrey, who had gone with her son—as she said, to acclimatize him—for his first years on the South American ranch, the development of which he had chosen for his career. Sir Gregory would be with his wife shortly, and she would miss Mrs. Daintrey no longer. But during the intervening weeks Honor had to lie on the couch in her old morning-room, or be wheeled in a chair on to the lawn when the autumnal weather was fine, and be brave, and think. That protracted process of solitary thinking, when her heart was fainting within her in the depths of sickness and

peril, with all which had gone before it, broke up the floodgates of Honor's nature.

Honor's father had died while the Ormthwaites were abroad, and her brothers and sisters had drifted more and more away from her, though letters in shabby or ostentatiously fine envelopes, badly addressed, followed the family in a roundabout way, to be duly acknowledged in the manner reckoned upon. It was only to one quarter that communications were sent at regular intervals. There was no need for intercourse of any kind to recall to Honor the bonds of the past, where she lay motionless, brooding and pondering all the day long. She remembered events—trifles, even—which she had entirely forgotten. She craved to cast them from her, but she could not. What would Honor not have given to be as she had been when she first came to Ormthwaite Manor, to rise and walk abroad in her old freedom from suffering and care? She had not known what it was to be tired or to shrink from what was coming in those days. Oh, to be at her husband's side on a hunting morning! It was barely September, but the hunting season would soon come round, and other young women, lithe of body and light of heart, young brides, as she had been, would be skimming across the bare fields, and taking the fences to the admiration of the hunt, and especially of one rider, who sat Black Beauty, and compelled the horse to let the pace be given by the new mare, Mayflower, because of the burden she bore. Would Honor ever again mount another Mayflower?

Stealing from under Honor's eyelashes, as she lay, trickled tears for the mother whom she had not known how to value, whom she had hardly mourned when she died, long before—the poor, honest, hard-working mother, who had been thankful for the bit of servants' washing at the Hall, to eke out her husband's earnings and let the children have more comforts. She had sat up in her bed with a last effort to divide what the family called "grandfather's buttons" between the only two daughters old enough to take care of them, and they had been sufficiently children still to be more occupied with the buttons than with the trembling, work-worn hands of the woman who was parting them.

There passed in procession before Honor a series of pictures. Two children making mud-pies in a village street, or blowing dandelion "clocks" in the field at the back of a couple of cottages, or creeping with dragging feet to the vicar's school. The one was a brown-faced, sharp-witted little girl, the other was a silly small boy, with fair, flaxen curls. He was always losing his slender senses, and running into danger from passing wheels of carts, from the horse-pond, or from the fists of the bigger boys. The little girl was proud of protecting him, and he clung to her championship. He still followed her and clung to her when they were lass and lad, and he was just beginning to find less trustworthy backers and comrades. She had still been proud of his dependence on her, while she had half despised him for it. She had entertained an

idle familiar fondness for him, as one may be fond of a domestic animal without judgment, but with some fitful approach to belief in and allegiance to its superiors.

In the dulness of Hayes, and the rudely enforced parental authority, when her mother called her "an idle slut" for dawdling over her work, and her father boxed her ears without ceremony for forgetting to go on an errand, she had relished having Job Clay, from whom she got her own way, to fall back upon. She had been proud of having "a young man"—all the prouder because her father and mother were dead against it—when not another girl of her age in the village owned such an appendage. She had hotly resented the imputation that she could not keep Job straight, that he had not the pith to stand up for her as she stood up for him, to work like a man for her, and to resist his tempters, who were already mocking at her and her more respectable kindred. She would listen to no advice, take no warning. She had made the bed on which her flesh was lacerated with sharp thorns. Oh, God in heaven! had she also made the narrow bed in which Job Clay had lain, troubling nobody, these sixteen years? Could she have kept him straight if she had been patient, if she had really cared for him as she knew now she could care for a man? Did the wretched lad's destruction lie at her door? She wrung her thin hands in impotent agony as she asked the question.

But Honor's reason and her moral sense were clear and just in her weakness. She could not

condemn herself unfairly. No woman alive could have saved Job Clay. He was as weak as water, unstable as the bog which quakes and sinks beneath the foot that steps on it in trust. He was worse than a fool, an ingrate through and through. Only a miracle from heaven could have redeemed him; and surely Heaven in its might would have mercy on the pitiful stuff of which he was made.

Honor could cast back this accusation which she had been impelled in morbid remorse to bring against herself.

But there was another accusation less easy to repel. The child—her child as well as Job Clay's—what had she done with it? She had as good as laid it down and left it, without looking over her shoulder. She remembered the taunt Lyddy Atkins had thrown at her on their last meeting. It was true. Also, she had felt little else than a sullen satisfaction when she had been falsely informed of the baby's death. She had not even gone out of her way to try if she could find the little grave. Yet other mothers watered their children's graves with their tears. But there had been no grave; the baby had not died. She was grown into a young woman whom Honor would not know if she saw her on a road or in a room, unless by that likeness to her father and the Clays, of which Lyddy Atkins had spoken. Honor could not recall one infant trait. She was not certain that she had given her child one kiss, unless it might be at that woman Lyddy's instigation. But what was Honor that she should speak—she, a woman who had



abandoned her child, who had lived for many years in closest companionship with the best man in the world, and all the while had been systematically deceiving him? How dared she blame Lyddy Atkins, who had been more kind to the child than the mother that bore her? Lyddy had cared for the child and reared her as her own. Honor had provided the means, no doubt, except for the three or four years when Lyddy—the elder Lyddy—had indulged herself in a stale romance, the masquerade of a dead baby and a living child of whose maintenance she had tired. But what was money compared to the constant tendance and kindly affection which even a pretended mother like Lyddy Atkins must have bestowed on the forsaken child? Lyddy had too much easy good nature to be cruel to children or animals. Honor had entertained a dim memory and vague thought of the kind when she had taken her baby and given it into her cousin's keeping. Into Lyddy Atkins's keeping for all these years! to grow up callous to the plainest obligations, an unprincipled woman—one of “a shifty lot,” as the man in the Burntwood shop had said.

Honor had spared her husband and sacrificed her child. How could she ever dream that a righteous God would commit to her keeping Gregory Ormthwaite's child, when she had been false to the trust of Job Clay's helpless baby? It ought to have been doubly sacred in a good woman's eyes, because it was that of a child worse than fatherless—a poor, forlorn little creature.

It is said the whole course of a drowning man's

previous life passes before him in a second ; but Honor got days and weeks in which to review her failures and misdeeds. So she went on, half dreaming, half realizing the past in the shadow of the lawn trees, so carefully chosen to shelter her from sun and wind, or in the spacious room so punctiliously and fruitlessly darkened that its mistress might find in it unbroken repose.

## XI

EIGHTEEN years was the age at which girls in the Ormthwaites' rank generally "came out," left the drudgery of their school-rooms behind them, were petted and made much of, had balls given in their honor, were presented at court, and launched on the cloudless gayety of their intoxicating first season.

There were the Heneage girls, Alice and Cecy. Their mother, Lady Mary, was the woman Lady Ormthwaite had known and liked best of all the women in the neighborhood. The two ladies had been quite intimate friends for several years, and it had not been Lady Mary's fault that the friendly intercourse had begun to dwindle before the Ormthwaites went abroad. The ages of the Heneage girls were just somewhere beyond eighteen. They were pretty, dainty, happy damsels, not yet puzzled and wearied with the problems of this problem-laden generation.

The very day after Lady Ormthwaite had been calling to mind the eighteen-years-old, or thereabouts, Heneage girls, Lady Mary, driving over for the third time to the manor to inquire for "poor dear Lady Ormthwaite," ventured to bring her girls, who had accompanied her, to the side of the

invalid's chair, apologizing while she did so for the slight disturbance their light feet and soft, low voices might cause in the vicinity of a sick woman debarred from company.

"I wished them to get a glimpse of their mother's old friend," explained Lady Mary, without entering into the details she had already communicated to her daughters as the little party drove between the two lodges. Lady Mary had said, "Now, girls, I will let you see, while you may, a woman who ten years ago was one of the most beautiful and solidly intellectual women in London. She was not only looked at, she was listened to whenever she chose to open her mouth. I remember one evening your father's being quite gratified because her opinion coincided with his on a change he was willing to see introduced into the game-laws. You can have no distinct remembrance of her, you two chits."

"Oh yes, I think I can remember," said the elder girl; "tall and handsome, a gently superb sort of woman, not appearing to take much notice of us children, but remembering our birthdays, and sending us the most charmingly acceptable presents."

"Yes, that was just like her."

"Who was she, mamma? Sir Gregory's wife, of course; but who besides?" asked Cecy.

"I am sure I can hardly tell—some sort of Clay of Weston, in Woldshire, I believe, which was odd, when one came to think of it, as they were no better than they should have been. But Lady Ormthwaite did not need the Lord Chamberlain to vouch for

her antecedents ; she carried her credentials in her looks and ways. She was a most delightful, most exemplary woman. It is the fashion to pretend that delightful women cannot be estimable, but she was both. Dear ! why do I speak of her in the past tense ?” Lady Mary took herself to task remorsefully. “ Please God, she will be restored to her husband and friends. Her baby will give her back all her old content and restfulness ; and think what a boy or a girl of his own will be to Sir Gregory ! I don’t suppose he will mind much which ; the property is not entailed, and if an heiress succeed, her husband can take her father’s name. He was always good to little girls. I believe he was your first love, Cecy.”

“ I know he was. But won’t the arrival of the heir, or heiress, be a sell— Do forgive me the slang, mamma ; I assure you we broke out into it at times, as a safety-valve, of course, at Newnham.”

“ You need not break out into it here. Your course of study is not so severe that you are in danger of talking shop.”

“ Mamma, mamma, caught ! You are taking refuge in slang yourself. But what was I saying ? Won’t it be a great disappointment to Greg Ormthwaite if there is a child at the manor, after all these years ?”

Lady Mary shrugged her shoulders and whipped up her ponies.

“ It wouldn’t be a disappointment to the county. Greg would be a sorry substitute for his cousin. I am afraid Greg is hopeless.”

"But he isn't bad," remonstrated Cecy. "Papa would not have him over constantly when he is at the manor to shoot and fish with Bert."

"He is worse than bad!" exclaimed Lady Mary, impatiently. Then she pulled herself up. "God forgive me, wife and mother, for making such a speech, in the presence of my children, too; but Greg is incurable. He is as dull and boorish as his cousin is scholarly and public-spirited, with a tinge of the old-world courtliness which is fast disappearing. There, girls, are the manor-house gates; you must make yourselves very small, and we must not stay above a minute."

Seated round the invalid's chair on the lawn, Lady Mary undertook all the talking.

"Would you have known these two great girls to be little Alice and Cecy if you had not been told? Of course I see a thousand things in which the child was mother to the woman. Alice's hair always grew down on her temples in that tiresome fashion, and Cecy might belong to the days of powder and patches because of the dark mole in the centre of her left cheek, just above that corner of her mouth, which she has a bad trick of biting."

Lady Mary pointed out the little distinctive marks with secret admiration, which was not lost on her daughters.

"Mamma, you know you always liked my hair to grow so. I believe you have made me turn it back on purpose to show how it grows," murmured Alice.

"And you know you bite your underlip when

you're thinking—papa says so—therefore I've a good right to bite mine," murmured Cecy.

"They are growing a great deal too much for me," complained Lady Mary, with cheerful resignation. "You must get well soon, dear Lady Ormthwaite, to help me to keep them in order. Only think of this monkey, Cecy, dictating to me what I'm to wear at the ball next week!"

"Because I will not have you a dowdy at my ball, mamma; you are to look your best, your very best, in my honor," announced Cecy.

"Yes," chimed in Alice, "and you have been allowing Carter to dress your hair abominably while I have been at Newnham and Cecy was in Egypt with our cousins. I wonder papa could stand it. You have far finer hair than either of us has to this day. Well, we think it the sweeter for the thread or two of silver. It must be spread over a cushion, and then we'll allow you to make Carter pin a morsel of lace on it, if you like."

"You hear the tyrants!" cried Lady Mary, winking away a suspicious moisture from her laughing eyes. "I cannot call my hair my own if this dreadful pair are set at liberty. I shall be to be pitied when they are back for good at the Old Hall. Yet when I want a note written in a hurry, or there is a tiresome guest to entertain, they are far enough to seek."

"Mamma, what a story! What a character to give us! Don't believe her, please, Lady Ormthwaite. As if Cecy did not write all the cards, with the orders, in her own hand, to the tradesmen,

for her ball. It is true, I did not come down to talk to that horribly tiresome Mr. Raikes, because I was devouring *Marcella* in order that it might go back with the other books in Mudie's box; and you knew it, mamma, and would not send up to interrupt me."

"Come away, girls; we have stayed too long, chattering about ourselves," cried Lady Mary, startled by catching the wistful, strained look in Lady Ormthwaite's eyes, and the deepening flush on her cheek. "You will rest now, dear, won't you? and the girls will come over and give you all the news of Cecy's ball. If it had not been for that, I could have wished to have left one of them with you, to read to you and brighten you up, and come backwards and forwards till Sir Gregory arrives."

"If we could have been of any use?" hesitated Alice and Cecy, a little alarmed at the suggestion, for Lady Ormthwaite had grown a stranger to them, and she had been silent and irresponsible while they had exerted themselves to entertain her.

"Oh, no, no," cried the tortured woman, "keep them away. Pray forgive me, dear Lady Mary, but if you will all go now I—I may be more like myself when you come again."

"Poor, poor thing! poor dear soul!" lamented kind Lady Mary under her breath, after mother and daughters had hurried over their leave-takings and were driving down the avenue. "She is utterly unlike her old self—a positive wreck. Such



a fine woman as she was ! She struck me as being on the verge of hysterics. I do wish Sir Gregory were come back."

How was young Lyddy Atkins celebrating her eighteenth year ?

Then, as days and weeks ran on, while Sir Gregory, on the tenter-hooks to get to his wife, was still unavoidably detained on his far-away island, a scheme formulated itself in Lady Ormthwaite's over-stimulated, over-sensitive brain, and took further shape and color, set in motion by the action of the jarred nerves. Could nothing be thought of to raise the dead weight of remorse which was crushing and killing Honor ? Could nothing be done ? Could no atonement be made ? Her daughter was little older than Honor had been when she fled from Hayes, as she remembered, with something like a shudder, the hard, fierce young girl who then took her fate into her own hands. She contrasted her with the woman who was constrained to look back on the girl's image. With all her shortcomings, there was a gulf between the girl and the woman. Could not a similar gulf be bridged for this unhappy young Lyddy Atkins, who had not even a right to the name she bore ? Could not the junction be effected quietly, secretly, so as to protect Gregory Ormthwaite from the pain and disgrace of a discovery, an exposure ? Was it too late to undo the real Lyddy Atkins's treachery, with all its evil consequences ? Might it not be possible to transform the innocent impostor, as her mother had been transformed, into something far better

than the unhappy woman with the plague-spot of an unnatural, wicked secret eating into her heart, into a modest, honest girl, whatever her station, able to look the whole world in the face? Something might be done if young Lyddy could come under her mother's care and influence, though she should never know that it was her mother who was taking interest in her, watching over her, shielding her. It had been an express stipulation in the last unrighteous compact between the cousins that nobody, neither the child herself nor anybody else, should be made acquainted with her real origin. Chatterer as Lyddy was, it appeared she could keep silence when it suited her, so that it was possible, for her own sake, she had preserved the compact intact. Might not the girl, in her ignorance, yet be saved? Might not Honor die in peace?

When Sir Gregory, travelling, regardless of expense and fatigue, by special boats and trains, reached home at last, and hung on the fragile shadow—all that was left him of his strong, beautiful wife—thankful that he had come in time, that she was still there, still his, that she had not embarked beyond recall for the silent land, she had a petition to make to him.

“Gregory,” she said, holding him tightly by the lapel of his coat, while she looked shyly away from him, “there is a connection of mine I should like to have near me just now, when my trial comes. It is not anybody who has been here before, or whom I know well; it is only a young girl, the daughter of a person I knew. She, the girl, is not

even aware of the relationship between us, and there is no necessity for her being told of it. I think she had better not, though she is one of my people, and it would be a comfort to me to have one of them—the one I mean—with me at this time. I need not say, Gregory,” went on the weakened voice in the ears of the astonished man, bending to catch each syllable, “you are everything to me. There is no occasion for me to tell you about that now. I know if doctors, monthly nurses, and lady helps would serve me, you would summon them by the hundred, where one of each would suffice. But one of my own people, come from my native place, a working-girl such as I was, with my blood in her veins, though she does not guess it—I should like to have her. Oh! don’t you understand?” she pleaded, piteously.

“I cannot say I do,” he answered, in a puzzled way; “but, of course, if you wish it, my dear, do as you like. Why should you ask my permission to gratify so simple a desire?” He thought it strange that his wife should grow fanciful, but, of course, her fancies, which he attributed to the state of her health, were to be gratified.

“She might help Ditton,” Honor urged, with feverish insistency. “Ditton has got a great deal to do of late, and she has not been well herself. If the baby lives I should like Ditton to have it. She has had experience. She brought up a baby from the breast—a child of a mistress she had, who died—before she came to us. She would like it, and if I live too—I wish to live! Oh, I must

live, Gregory!—there will be all the more call for this girl to help Ditton with baby and me.”

If Honor had asked Sir Gregory for the half, for the whole of the worldly goods with which he was supposed to have endowed her when they took their marriage vows, he would have given it to her at that moment. He considered her suggestion whimsical and injudicious, and the degree to which she was bent on obtaining it out of bounds. Honor had neither been whimsical, nor injudicious, nor vehement in the dear old days; but there, the most reasonable women were privileged to be unreasonable sometimes. This request—no great tax on his indulgence—should be granted.

“Certainly, my dear Honor. Have whom you wish about you. I could have wished this girl—as you say she is—had been older; and I should have had a little fear that if the girl ever came to know that there was a relationship between you, she might presume upon it, however distant, and complications might arise. However, you are not a woman who is incapable of readjusting complications. Yes, yes, Honor, just as you choose.”

He would have stooped and kissed her, but before he could prevent her, instead she caught his hand, kissed it, and laid her cheek against it, wetting it with her tears.

## XII

LADY ORMTHWAITE's health improved under the solace of her husband's presence and attentions. She was able to drive out a little, with him for her charioteer. She sat up most of the day either in the morning-room or in her dressing-room. The doctor-in-chief began to rub his hands and say things were going on fairly well.

In the meantime, "Miss Atkins," the young woman who was coming to help Ditton, was about to start for Ormthwaite Manor, and there was considerable speculation about her already in the servants' hall. Ditton was not altogether pleased at being considered in want of a subordinate, and at having one provided for her without her having a voice in the selection. But, like Sir Gregory, she was of opinion that Lady Ormthwaite was not to be contradicted under the circumstances. She had been a reasonable lady, and easy for a servant to get on with hitherto, and she had had a bad time; any woman with a heart in her breast might feel for my lady. It was only Ditton's duty to give way to her mistress; she was not going to be the one to cross her, any more than the master would thwart her, and he was a husband among a thousand. But where did her ladyship pick up her

new maid? was the question bandied by the interested conclave in the servants' hall. Where did Lady Ormthwaite hear of Miss Atkins? Who recommended her? Of course it was a matter of moment to the speakers, for Miss Atkins was to come into their circle, and if she was not a well-mannered young woman, one the other members could approve of and take to, it would spoil the harmony of the party, and be hard on poor Mrs. Ditton. Even Mr. Tolley, who was supposed to know everything which concerned the family, knew nothing about the new-comer—at least, he would not own to the knowledge when he was approached on the subject by Mrs. Ditton herself, though the two were good friends.

Lady Ormthwaite had declined to admit that she was not able to make the few arrangements for the girl's coming. She had written two letters on the subject. One was to ask—as if it were a favor relating to a stranger—whether the elder Lyddy Atkins would agree to Lyddy junior's coming over to the manor to be there for a time on trial, as under waiting-maid? In case of a consent to the proposal, Lady Ormthwaite was willing to continue to pay to Mrs. Atkins the allowance settled on her eight years before. Not only so; as Henry Atkins was recently dead, and as his widow might feel lonely left by herself, Lady Ormthwaite would pay the expenses of a girl, such as the one she was asking Lyddy Atkins to part with, to help her in her household work, and be company for her. At the same time Lady Ormthwaite wished it to be dis-

tinctly understood that it was in the capacity of under waiting-maid, and in that alone, that she offered to receive the young girl, Lyddy Atkins, into her household. Nothing else was to be thought or spoken of ; no other idea was to be entertained for a moment.

In reply, Lyddy Atkins wrote a mystified, excited, voluble letter. Only one thing was plain in it—that she understood the conditions on which the business was to be transacted, and the strict limitations of the intercourse, even by letter, on the subject. Lyddy rambled off into explanations of the advantages she had given to young Lyddy, what the girl was able for, and how difficult she—the elder Lyddy—would find it to part from her. But what mother would stand in a daughter's light? Lady Ormthwaite had been Mrs. Atkins's old and tried friend—she might say her benefactress (“benefackress,” Lyddy spelled the word)—and if she wished to have young Lyddy in her family, why, it would ill become old Lyddy to raise an objection. This letter was a masterpiece of Lyddy's crafty art, and in this light she regarded it with much pride.

Lady Ormthwaite's second letter was in reply to Lyddy's. She wished the girl to come directly. There was no occasion for anybody to accompany her. The writer of the letter was too ailing to receive visitors, even old acquaintances or family connections. She forwarded money for the girl's expenses. There was a postscript to the letter: Honor did not mean, she said—for she felt it would

be both unfair and unfeeling—that the younger Lyddy and the relative who had brought her up were not to meet again. Arrangements would be made for that purpose, but Lady Ormthwaite was not able to enter upon them then. That was a thing to be seen to in the future ; they must leave it to her.

In the end Lady Ormthwaite sent Tolley half way to meet the stranger. How did Honor know whether or not her cousin Lyddy, impulsive and reckless, might not have broken faith with her—Honor—and filled the girl's head with wild, impossible anticipations before she started ? And if the younger Lyddy had learned the ways of the woman she had lived with so long, who could tell what cock-and-bull stories she might not indulge in for the benefit of her fellow-travellers ? It was a grave risk, yet Honor would not go back from encountering it. And she had nobody to trust to save Tolley ; though, when she came to think of it, Tolley knew no more of the matter than his master guessed. Still, somehow, when she looked with mute appeal into the face of the stiff and gray old servant, who had been faithful to his master's confidence in him, she felt he understood her in part, and was a stay to her, of his kind.

All the afternoon of Miss Atkins's arrival Lady Ormthwaite sat awaiting her with a red spot on each of her white cheeks. It was in vain that Ditton besought her to lie down and take her usual rest, or that Sir Gregory tried to coax her to go out for a drive with him, or proposed to read aloud to



her an article in the *Nineteenth Century* in which she was interested. She could not sleep though she were to lie down. She would prefer to stay at home and be left to herself, as she had various things to think of and see about. She was clearly not attending when Sir Gregory read, though, as a rule, she put everything away from her to listen to him.

"Poor dear Honor!" he said to himself with a sigh, as he quitted her; "trifles bulk largely with her nowadays. A straw seems to get on her nerves. I do believe it is the coming of this new maid which is worrying her. The disposal of the whole train at Government House used not to put her out."

Honor Ormthwaite was not a superstitious woman. It was by an act of tardy, halting justice she was extending her protection and a share of her favor to the daughter she had banished for so many years from her sight, and as much as possible from her thoughts. It was not to propitiate an offended Deity and to avert from Honor's unborn child, Gregory Ormthwaite's precious child, that she summoned her first-born—who had better never been born—to have her part, as it were, like Lazarus and the dogs, in the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table, at which Honor sat as mistress.

She had no faith in that mystic tie of blood which Shakespeare maintains asserts itself in the most adverse circumstances. But if ever such unerring instinct existed, it must surely be here, where the infant she had borne in misery, and held in her weary arms day and night for the first few

weeks of its troubled existence, stood before her, a girl such as Honor had been when she gave this Lyddy birth. Yet animals are not supposed to retain any recollection or sense of their offspring which have been parted from them, after their young are no longer dependent upon them for sustenance and shelter. But Honor was not a mere animal; and there must be something about the daughter which would tell the mother this was her very own child, separated from her for the lifetime of the younger woman, renounced, rejected, but still connected with her by unseen, indissoluble bonds, which would send such an answering thrill through each as must be sternly guarded against and ruthlessly stifled in its first struggling utterance for the sake of both—for the sake of one infinitely worthier than either.

Honor schooled herself during these heart-throbs to meet the decisive moment, as she sat in her dressing-room, in her soft blue-gray invalid's dress and lace cap, with her fur wraps cast about her, for the early autumn was chill to one recently come from a warmer climate. Mirrored, curtained, cushioned comfort, culminating in the beauty of the toilet-table, with its gold, silver, and ivory appointments, was around her. Honor had been accustomed to keep within modest bounds in her expenditure. She had no fondness for costly toys; a superfluity of contributions to her ease and enjoyment simply bored her. She was independent, stoical, perhaps a little austere by nature. A craving for self-indulgence had never been one of her

snare, as it is apt to be of many scantily educated, empty-headed women, rising from the working-class. She had not been sensuous any more than she was sensual ; the kind and amount of her intellect had saved her from that. She was not one of those toilers who by singular chances find themselves in the Sybarites' seats, and immediately out-Herod Herod in senseless profusion and gross extravagance. But with all her reservations and restrictions Honor knew what was due to the mistress of Ormthwaite Manor. Her dressing-room could not be a High Church sister's cubicle. It was in all reasonable respects suitable for the wife of a country gentleman and an ex-governor of—not the smallest of England's colonies. The room was likely to be a revelation to a girl who had lived in the sluttish untidiness and rough abundance of Lyddy Atkins's *ménage*.

At last Lady Ormthwaite came face to face with the ordeal she had provoked. She had given orders for Miss Atkins to be sent up to her as soon as she arrived. The poor woman felt she could not endure further delay ; better to be in the thick of the battle, and know the worst at once, than to linger on the edge till her strength left her. Lady Ormthwaite's strained ears distinguished the little bustle of an arrival, though it was only in the servants' quarters. She heard Ditton's foot, not so quick or light as it had been, followed by a brisker pitter-patter on the stair and in the corridor. She grasped the arm of her chair ; a mist swam before her eyes as the door opened. She recovered herself by a su-

preme exercise of will, though Ditton's voice, speaking solemnly and a little reproachfully, for she thought her once discreet mistress had grown imprudent and a little wrong-headed in making this uncalled-for effort, sounded far away.

"This is the young person, Miss Atkins, my lady, as is come. You wished to see her for a few minutes the first thing."

Honor forced herself to look up, and then looked away again, astounded, confounded. There was some mistake. This could not be any one with whom she had to do—this little, mincing, tripping creature, dressed in the extreme version of a fashion already on the wane among the novelty-craving public with whom it had taken its rise. The biscuit-colored alpaca frock was of a cheap material, while its puffed-up sleeves and pinched-in waist were on pronounced lines. The flimsy mantle of ribbon and lace had been carefully planned so as not to conceal the waist, with its last cruel compression of a leather belt, dragged together by a glittering buckle. It need hardly be mentioned that the mantle was not the slightest protection to the shoulders. The costume was completed by the most exasperatingly smart of small hats, whose cluster of pink bows, standing erect, might be intended to increase by several inches the height of the wearer. These details belonged to clothes vulgarly conspicuous, foolishly ill-chosen clothes, which in this case were very much in evidence. What was within the clothes was a wriggling fashion-plate figure, and a little, round, pink-and-white face, the

upper part hidden to the eyes by the fluffy curls and rings of an elaborate, fair-haired fringe.

It could not be ! There was some extraordinary blunder ; this dressed-up doll of a girl could not be Lyddy Atkins—Lyddy Clay.

Ah, there was the explanation ! Honor recognized with a pang of remembrance the Clay traits, and her cousin had said little Lyddy was like her father, like the Clays. There were Job Clay's pink-and-white cheeks before they were bleached and sodden by dissipation. There was his fair, curly hair, cut, combed, and built into a fringe. There was his meaningless grin, toned down into a complacent simper. Even his hanging lip was there, transformed into a half-saucy pout. The replica of the weak, debased working-man appeared, modified by circumstances, in the shape of a pretty, silly butterfly of a girl.

"Good-afternoon, madam—my lady." The shrilly sweet voice, with its provincial accent, spoke first—as a ghost is bound to speak, unawed, undaunted. "You wish to speak to me of my duties, this old lady tells me ; but you don't seem up to much, my lady. I can wait to be told another day."

Ditton scowled at being called an old lady, and at the forwardness of the chit speaking first to her mistress, and presuming to suggest that she knew what Lady Ormthwaite was fit for, and was so obliging as to propose to wait for her instructions.

Lady Ormthwaite gave a gasp, but it was of unspeakable relief. Here was no thrill of nature on

the girl's part bursting through the strongest barriers. Here was only the pert assurance of a young girl so untrained as not to know how to behave herself in the capacity of a waiting-maid, to which she aspired, so dense in her smartness as not to be aware that to make herself at home without being asked, and to take the initiative, were liberties under the circumstances. Cousin Lyddy had kept faith with Honor after all.

As for Honor, the mysterious thrill, which she had awaited quaking, was conspicuous by its absence. It was replaced by nothing newer or more overpowering than a stab of remembrance; nay, there was some consolation in the remembrance, for this was a new development of the Clays Honor had known. She could cope with this self-satisfied, airy young person. She might hope to be of use to her. It would be mortifying, intensely mortifying, perhaps, when she came to analyze the situation, to find this was all which it contained, to realize that there was no trace of anything more touching, more tragic in its depths. Instead of a sympathetic yearning which should have torn her heart asunder, she felt only an inclination to smile, even in her weakness, at being brought into contact with such a daughter; it was so great a collapse, so grotesque an anti-climax.

But what had she to expect from a child of Job Clay's, a *protégée* of Lyddy Atkins's? And it might have been infinitely worse.

"You may go, Ditton," Lady Ormthwaite said aloud, "and leave me to have a few minutes' talk

---

with Lydia Atkins"—she enunciated the name firmly—"I will ring presently."

Dutton retired reluctantly, feeling that her mistress had been guilty of another unaccountable solecism, and was, in fact, not treating her, Ditton, as she ought to be treated, by sending her away and talking in private with this free-and-easy, dressed-up young minx.

"Sit down, Lydia," said Lady Ormthwaite, and the words were not out of her mouth when Lydia stepped forward, took the nearest chair, crossed the thin boots—far too thin for country roads—on the carpet before her, and crossed her hands, encased in a pair of shabby Suedes, two sizes too small for her, in her lap.

The promptitude of the action, which the mistress of the house had brought upon herself, though she did not take it for more than it was worth, and did not fear it, stopped her breath, and left Lydia for the second time to open the conversation. She was not in such a hurry now. Her eyes—they were blue eyes, like Job Clay's, but they were darker, with darker lashes; some people might even call them pretty, though they were saucer eyes—were roaming round the room, gloating on the inlaid walnut furniture, the cheval-mirror, the softness of the Turkish carpet, the tiles on the hearth, the delicate china on the chimney-piece, and on the Burmese tray with the invalid's tea-service on the little table at Lady Ormthwaite's elbow. The eyes wandered further: to the ivory-handled brushes, the silver taper-stand and match-box, the golden stop-

pers of the cut-glass toilet bottles. Lydia took everything in at a glance. She did more; she appraised Lady Ormthwaite's dress, her air, her character.

"Dowdy, I calls her," was Lydia's private comment, "and dull—maybe strict. That was why I took her up so quickly about telling me my duties. She looks old, too, a deal older than mother; but then mother said Lady Ormthwaite had gone through heaps of trouble, almost as much as mother's self has had to bear. And I was told my lady was 'igh in her still way, and it might be as much as my place was worth if I forgot myself and went too far. But there, I means to give satisfaction. The stuff of that gown she has on cost half a crown a yard if it cost a penny. And them furs! the sealskin with the sable trimming, and the bear-skin over her feet—my! Crowther has not their match in his whole shop. If she were not to come out of her child-bed, now, if she were to be took, I wonder what they would do with her clothes? Would they all go to that sour-faced Mrs. Ditton? or would there be a fair division? Not that I wish her to be took, poor woman!"—Lydia came to the magnanimous conclusion—"she has never done me an ill turn. She has offered me her place—why, is a mystery to me, and mother pretends she has no notion; but she is a deep one, is mother. If anything happened to my lady there would be an end of my fine place, which has come to me sudden like, and I bet the wage will be liberaller than what we called our salaries at Crowther's, though it ain't

|

—



fixed yet, till she sees what I'm up to, I take it. I don't believe there will be half the work there was to do at Crowther's, even when there was no sale on and no stock-taking. Lady Ormthwaite don't look such a cat as Miss Pearce looked when she was put out. There will not be the same jolly good fun as we had sometimes—they old servants are a precious stuck-up lot—and I won't see *him*—not till he sees fit to come after me and make it up; but I'll put up with it for a time, at least, till I find how it is going to turn out."

These reflections passed with the speed of lightning through Lydia's mind, for, however shallow she might be, she had not inherited Job Clay's slowness. As she was of the opposite sex, it was hardly in nature that she should have inherited it. Accordingly, she felt it incumbent on her to speak for Lady Ormthwaite.

"You look awful bad, madam," she remarked, with the candor of Cousin Lyddy's class. "Ain't there anything I can do or get for you?" There was a ring of genuine kindness in the last sentence. Somehow it did not heap coals of fire on Honor's head, as it ought to have done, but it touched her; it proved that the stupid, silly little goose before her had a heart.

"You can tell me what you have done before now, and what you think you can do here," suggested Lady Ormthwaite, lying back in her chair.

Lydia obeyed the injunction readily. She poured forth all the particulars of her short history, totally unconscious of the effect she produced. Mother

had kept her at the Board School till she had passed all the standards; she had even been a pupil-teacher, she was so advanced a scholar, till she had to go home for father's last illness. After he was gone she could not be idle. It was worse for her than for mother, who did her housekeeping and her shopping herself, and was always dropping in on her cronies and having them drop in on her; whereas Lydia's former school companions were doing for themselves, and were not dependent on their mothers for every penny they spent. It was not that mother could not be good-natured and free-handed enough when she was in the humor; but it was not nice—was it?—for a big girl not to have a sixpence to spend, not that she could call her own, and to be forced to go to her mother for every snip of riband or single gum-flower she wanted for an outing. Lydia thought of trying dressmaking, as she had got a prize for plain sewing at school. She did go so far into the dressmaking as to see how the measuring and fitting were done, and she must say she was sharp; she could pick up a thing or two in no time. She could undertake to alter Lady Ormthwaite's gowns, or cut them out and stitch them together from the beginning. She made her own dresses with no help, save from what she saw in the shop-windows and a paper pattern occasionally. Lady Ormthwaite could see for herself how they looked, and Lydia glanced up and down proudly at her puffed-up shoulders and her pulled-in waist.

Then a place fell vacant among the young ladies at Crowther's—the big draper's shop in Burntwood.

She thought she would like that better than the dressmaking ; it would be livelier, she would not have to sit still for hours at a time, and she would have more company. So she applied, and was engaged as soon as the manager set eyes on her—Lydia emphasized the words with a conscious smirk—and she had been at Crowther's ever since.

Lady Ormthwaite made her private comment, "It was there you learned to say 'madam,' and to dress your hair in a close imitation of a barber's block. I wonder how the child does it, and how long it takes her to do it?"

An irritating, noisy cough had repeatedly interrupted Lydia's speech.

"I am afraid you have caught cold," said Lady Ormthwaite. "Are you sure that little mantle is warm enough to travel in?"

"Oh, good gracious ! yes"—shrugging her narrow shoulders. "I beg your pardon, madam—my lady"—Lydia corrected herself—"but the young ladies at Crowther's would as lief be out of the world as out of the fashion. We has to set the fashions ; it is part of our business. You would not have us wrap up as if we were so many old frumps. We should be wearing flannel vests next!"

"If you enter my service, Lydia, and continue in it," said Lady Ormthwaite, steadily, "you will have to wear a warm cloth jacket and a flannel vest when it is necessary."

Lydia stared disconcertedly. Was this "servitude"? Crowther's manager had never interfered with the young ladies' dress, so long as they wore

black in the show-rooms, and were smart both in and out of them. But she was not going to throw up her chances on the first provocation ; therefore she said nothing.

"I should think," resumed Lady Ormthwaite, in her low, calm voice, "you are tired with your journey ; you had better go and have tea with the others. You can unpack and arrange your belongings in the evening. Mrs. Ditton will find you some sewing to do to-morrow. That will do, Lydia."

Honor had dismissed the girl as if she were an ordinary servant, and Lydia had departed at her mistress's bidding. Honor had lectured the delinquent on risking her health, and had sought to put a check on the idiotic proceeding, exactly as she would have done in the case of any other young waiting-maid. Finally, Honor had sent Lydia to sit down at the table over which the butler and housekeeper presided, at which the footmen, cook, and entire domestic staff "assisted." Honor had not the smallest doubt—she had the testimony of her own eyes and ears to that effect—that these men and women could lay claim to a higher order of intelligence, and were altogether wiser and more estimable members of society than was true of Lydia Atkins. And Honor remembered that she had been in the habit formerly of consigning her brothers and sisters to the same "second table," as it was euphemistically termed. She had done it without a scruple, but, somehow, this was different. She might not think so when Lydia was in her presence, when Honor felt strongly tempted to

deny the relationship between them ; but when Lydia was out of her sight a startling sense of the inconsistency—which she had, as she imagined, in a manner anticipated and been prepared for—smote her overwhelmingly. Her daughter, part of herself, chattering to Richard, the younger footman, or making eyes and tossing her head for the benefit of Rudd, the dandy groom ! Honor grew crimson at the thought.

The next moment Sir Gregory came into the room with a whimsical smile on his lips. “ Well, my dear, I have seen your new importation at the top of the back stairs, where Tolley had lugged me that I might be convinced how badly these workmen from Sykes had done the last repairs.”

“ And what do you think of her ?” asked Lady Ormthwaite, in a constrained voice, shading her flushed face with her hand.

“ Oh, the usual article, when ignorant rusticity gets its first coat of polish, and succeeds in converting itself into a mongrel, an oddity. For my part, I prefer the original rustic. But, after all, the poor little thing may have done her best according to her lights,” acknowledged the kindly gentleman relentingly. “ She may be taking her first step in learning, and we are all apt to come croppers and make guys of ourselves over that terrible first step. She might afford you a laugh, only you are too conscientious and tender-hearted to laugh at raw folly. I wish I could think she would be a credit and comfort to you otherwise, since you have taken a fancy to have a countrywoman, one

of your village lasses, with you. Good heavens! the modiste, if not the school-master, is abroad when this is what our village girls are coming to."

"She has not come straight from a village, but from a town," said Honor, abruptly. "Gregory, what was I when you saw me first?"

"You, Honor, you!" he repeated, opening his eyes wide. "Why, you were a woman, a rarely perfect woman, and not a thing."

"Ah, poor little thing," said Honor, piteously, "she has had even fewer chances than fell in the woman's way."

"But you have taken her in hand"—he tried to be encouraging—"you may make something of the puppet if there is a foundation to build on."

After the first shock of her *début* Lydia fared better, and fell into a niche of her own in the establishment with greater ease and celerity than could have been looked for. She was exceedingly good-natured and gay, with a youthful gayety which enlivened the staid household below-stairs. Her airs and graces diverted as well as provoked the second table, while she could stand up for herself, with what even her supporters considered decided "cheek," as one of Crowther's young ladies in the past and a finished Abigail in the bud. She was so briskly irrepressible, and at the same time so fearlessly friendly, as to get the better even of Ditton. Lydia was willing to learn what was expected from her. She was neat and quick-handed after a manner, if by no means thorough; but then nobody reckoned on her being thorough. She lent the

other maids her paper patterns and the fashion-plates she so much resembled. She helped the younger women to their hearts' content in the female infatuation of spoiling the stuffs for their new gowns and jackets, in order to make themselves in the height of the fashion, like Lydia.

In her light, careless way, Lydia had acquired the desirable perception, somehow, whether at her Board School, during her apprenticeship to a Burntwood dressmaker, or at Crowther's—certainly not under Lyddy Atkins's auspices—of the essential difference between *meum* and *tuum*, and that there was a stringent obligation not to confound the two. She neither borrowed nor helped herself to her neighbors' goods. Apart from the arrant bragging, she did not so much as fib gratuitously, or unless under great provocation.

Honor was thankful for small mercies. She could take comfort in any kind of moral standard, and trust that it would grow more elevated by dint of precept and example. Neither did it appear that Lydia was malicious or spiteful, though she was as vain as a peacock, as unsubstantial and difficult to grasp as a feather, and as silly as an ignorant, pert young girl, spoiled by the soiled and vulgar hands through which she had passed, was likely to be. For her weapon of defence she had, lurking behind her superficial boldness, the instinct of cunning, with which weak creatures are generally supplied.

### XIII

HIGH-MINDED and kind-hearted as Sir Gregory Ormthwaite was, he had the distaste which many, perhaps most, men feel to heirs who are not their children. Sir Gregory's heir-apparent—till his wife gave him a child—was the son of a dead cousin, another "Gregory Ormthwaite."

Young Greg, an orphan, had grown up and entered upon a small patrimony which his father had left to him, but he had profited much more by his cousin's allowance, made to him as the future squire of Ormthwaite Manor. Greg had grown up in the confident expectation of this result, and, though he was neither scheming nor grasping, he set a proper value on his natural inheritance. Indeed, as he had been often told, if it failed him there was nothing before him except one or other of the colonies—the more distant, the rougher and ruder, where squatters and pioneers were most in requisition, the better. It might be a pity if he was balked of his destination, or rather if his destination was balked of him, since, in spite of the strenuous efforts some young men of his class make to degenerate into mere gamekeepers and grooms, the actual transformation is not possible while the golden youths remain in the land of their birth



and the station to which they were born. The eager aspirants may be buyers or sellers of horses, men on the turf, aristocratic bookmakers, whips driving aristocratic coaches, sailors of yachts for their nominal captains, professional cricketers; but they cannot be *bona fide* gamekeepers and grooms and retain their place in the circles which the men came into the world to adorn. The nearest approach to a happier state of being for them is when they can become so-called agents or gentlemen bailiffs on the estates of better-endowed comrades, but that implies a knowledge of agriculture and of accounts, as well as of horses, dogs, and small game, and of the first Greg Ormthwaite had hardly a scrap, any more than he had of Latin or Greek. The Englishman's desire to kill was strong in Greg, though, apart from guns and fishing-rods, he was a notoriously pacific, harmless individual.

As Greg had stood all his life in close proximity to the succession to a great English estate, he had received in full all these educational and social advantages, which Lyddy Atkins believed she had given the younger Lyddy when she sent her under compulsion to a Board School, apprenticed her to a dressmaker, and installed her at Crowther's. Greg had been under a carefully selected private tutor at a great public school and at a famous university; but beyond the bare rudiments—in which spelling was not included—all that he had learned was to play cricket and tennis, hockey and polo and billiards, to ride, to row, and shoot, to hunt with the nearest packs, to kill rats with the most

experienced rat-catcher, and box like a regular pugilist. His sole school and university prizes had been cups for races run or rowed, or for "high jumps" which a professional acrobat might have envied. If he could have been a pugilist or an acrobat he would have had an object in life, and might have made his fortune; but, unfortunately, to be a pugilist or an acrobat was as much out of the question as to be a gamekeeper or a groom. He might have made not a bad soldier, so far as drill and marching and standing to be shot at went, but as ill-luck would have it the idea had not occurred to him and his cousin, who was also his guardian, in time, even if a sufficient amount of cramming could have been got into Greg to enable him to pass a modern army examination. His cousin expressed his satisfaction in the fact that as yet no agricultural examination was imposed on would-be colonists.

Sir Gregory and Lady Ormthwaite differed, as they seldom did, in their estimate of Greg and his limitations. Sir Gregory said, with soreness and bitterness of spirit, that his cousin was incorrigibly idle and lazy, and disgracefully insensible to his absolute lack of scholarship, and to the trial he had been to his college authorities.

Lady Ormthwaite urged that it was Greg's loss, and not his fault, that he had no head for books or study. She represented that though he had run through his original patrimony, his debts were comparatively few, and that if he was little else than a sportsman and jockey, he was not vicious. He had

kept out of drinking sets, he had played games of chance for amusement rather than profit, so that his stakes had been within bounds ; and not a single charge of profligacy had ever been brought against him. She ventured to say he was as modest as an innocent woman.

Sir Gregory argued back that Greg had been so frequently in training for some paltry match or other that he had not acquired the habit of getting tipsy. He was virtuous—well, because he did not have it in him to be the reverse ; he was too thick-skinned, too heavy-blooded, too much occupied with vermin and their destruction, with the delight of exercising his wiry, terrier body at the expense of his doltish brain to be open to a man's temptations.

Lady Ormthwaite grew quite hot and excited in asserting that it was utterly unlike her husband—which it was, for the most part ; but Greg had been a grievous thorn rankling in Sir Gregory's flesh—to be so unjust to his young cousin. She liked Greg ; he had always been kind in his clumsy way, and bashfully respectful to her.

Sir Gregory waxed still more wrathful. He would have liked to see the fellow presume to be anything else. There would have been the worst crow of all to pluck with him if he had dreamed of being guilty of the insolence she hinted at. Besides, who could be anything else save kind and respectful to the mistress of Ormthwaite Manor ? Surely not the cub Greg Ormthwaite, to whom she had shown herself only too forbearing and indulgent.

It was the attitude of the mortified and aggrieved man to the lad who has offended him, whose offences the woman—however sympathetic as a rule—cannot see in the same black light, for the simple reason that she is a woman, with the capacity of motherhood in her, dealing with a lad young enough to have been her son. If the tables had been turned, and a girl was the offender, the same inequality in dispensing justice might again have appeared, with the woman for the stern accuser and the man for the compassionate apologist.

Sir Gregory's warped vision where Greg was concerned was conspicuous in the light in which he regarded a visit Greg paid at this time to the manor-house. Greg had always come to Ormthwaite as a matter of course for the shooting season whether the family were at home or abroad, and he would not for the world have remained away this year. It was a tremendous "sell," this late prospect of a child to cut him out of the property he had regarded as good as his; for though he knew the boss did not like him, it never entered into Greg's stupid, honest mind that his cousin could disinherit him and leave the property which had been their forefathers' to a stranger. Greg had gone so far in his peregrinations, pipe in mouth, over the fields and about the offices, as to project new kennels and stables, for a pack of harriers and a hunting and racing stud, unapproachable in the county—in the country, together with a new billiard-room to accommodate a swell billiard-table, which should replace the beastly old affair with

which Sir Gregory was satisfied. But as it was, Greg felt a shy desire to show to the Ormthwaites, particularly to Lady Ormthwaite, that he bore her no malice for what was likely to be the untoward change in his fortunes, caused by the happy event in his cousins' lives. It made no difference in his feelings to them ; indeed, it made him more conciliatory to Sir Gregory, and more openly anxious to please Lady Ormthwaite than he had ever shown himself before.

Honor penetrated his impulse directly, and gave him credit for the genuine manliness and disinterested good-will under the circumstances.

But, alas ! for the old squire and ex-governor, the scholar and gentleman, what was more, the worthy man's correct and charitable judgment of his fellow. Sir Gregory insisted, as far as he could without vexing his ailing wife, that Greg was there to spy the land, to watch over his interests, to bestow on his relatives the amount of time-serving and sneakiness which could co-exist with his rudeness and uncouthness.

Until now Greg had not been very unhappy under his cousin's permanent disapproval. It was nasty, of course, to be perpetually in some one's black books ; but he could keep out of that some one's way as much as possible. Sir Gregory's dislike did not stretch the length of curtailing Greg's allowance. On the contrary, he had since his return paid again, through his lawyer, Greg's debts, although he had gruffly refused to listen to Greg's halting thanks for the favor.

Greg had not sufficient personal pride and vanity—he was inclined to entertain a low opinion of his deserts, apart from his achievement as a Jehu or a Nimrod—to bear a grudge against the poor old beggar who had done his duty by him very fairly, so that it was a mortal pity that he had been nothing save a cross to the old gentleman, while the two could not pull together, or square it off, anyhow.

But as for Lady Ormthwaite, she was a regular brick and stunner, and no mistake! Greg would maintain it with his last breath; and he *was* glad—other fellows might scout at such a sentiment—he was glad she was going to have a baby of her own, for he supposed all women wanted babies, and no doubt she would like to give old Ormthwaite a kid to succeed him—a son who would be after his heart, would peg away at rot of classics and mathematics, and sap, and go in for duties and proprieties all day long. Why not, if fathers and mothers were blessed with such prodigies?—only it was a pity the Ormthwaites' phenomenon had not made his appearance till Greg was of age.

Greg's greatest troubles, in the past and in the present, proceeded from the obligations of society, and from his own deficient manners and deportment. He was well born, and ought to have been well bred. He had been under a dancing-master not less than under a drill-sergeant and a fencing-master in his college youth. He had sat at rich men's tables, and the tables furnished for rich men's sons, the most of his life, and at least one competent judge would have vouched for the fact that at heart

poor, stupid, clownish Greg Ormthwaite was a true man and a gentleman. But a man cannot take his delight, say, in driving an engine day after day, and not come to resemble an engine-driver. He cannot practise the duties of a skipper week after week and not get more or less of a skipper's roll in his gait and a skipper's talk in his mouth. He cannot consort for half of the year with real or even with amateur gamekeepers, huntsmen, whippers-in, without taking very much the color and tone of his associates.

Greg had begun to feel himself anything rather than at home in a drawing-room or a ball-room. He had no polite small talk. He felt that ladies stared at some of his words and ways, and that they soon tired of his society. They were plainly as uncomfortable with him as he was with them. When they looked anything else it was still worse, and Greg, instead of slouching his back, blushing up to the ears, and seeking to make his escape, took to scowling and elbowing an outlet for himself, in a manner altogether ill-bred and plebeian. This had happened when Greg was persuaded he had got among a bad sort, who were making a dead set at the heir of Ormthwaite Manor. But he was not likely to be troubled by such unscrupulous assailants in the time to come. Therefore, though Greg could "get on" well enough with a lower order of respectable women, who were not too refined, and were frank and free with him, and could even chaff them for their entertainment and his, he was rapidly falling out of touch with ladies. When he was

down at Ormthwaite Manor he had ceased to seek any company beyond what he found in the house. He would not even intrude—as he believed it might be counted—his *gauche* personality at the old hall, where he used to go and shoot and fish with Bert Heneage. He had grown to fight as shy of Lady Mary and the Heneage girls as they fought shy of him.

This year Greg was left more to himself than before, since Lady Ormthwaite could not take him in hand, and persuade him to abandon the billiard-room and smoking-room for her drawing-room, or coax him to accompany her to the neighboring country-houses. There was the shooting to be sure, but he could not shoot day and night. There were days, even, when it rained cats and dogs; and there were foggy mornings and fag ends of afternoons, when the partridges were growing wild and scarce, and the hares had not come on, and the rabbits and wild ducks were to be left as a last resource later in autumn, and there was a kind of interregnum. Then the squire, and any other men who figured as “guns” in his party, the keepers and their assistants, the very dogs, seemed to think they had got enough of banging and pointing and fetching and carrying, and might draw off their forces till a fresh day.

On these occasions Greg, lounging about with his hands thrust into his shooting-coat pockets, was fain to hail any novelty which would procure him diversion. He was curious to learn the history of the comical little girl who might have figured be-



fore the footlights. She crossed his path now and then, and she did not object to cross it after the first chance encounter; and, if she did not look at him—well, she had no objection to his looking at her, as well he might, since he had never seen anything like her at Ormthwaite before. “A young waiting and sewing maid come to assist Mrs. Ditton.” He was glad to hear it, for Ditton would not be a bad sort of dragon; neither would old Stiff-back (Tolley).

The most of the servants, old and young, had, without any disloyalty to Sir Gregory and Lady Ormthwaite, a sneaking kindness for Greg, not merely because he was easy to serve, and free-handed when he had got anything in his hand, not altogether because they had been accustomed to regard him as the young master, but because he was on the eve of being set aside and dispossessed; and that was a romance patent to the servants’ hall. Greg was a queer figure for the hero of romance, but he served for lack of a better, while every servants’ hall possessed of a soul, or a conglomeration of souls, dearly loves a romance in real life.

Greg could also have told the new girl that her mistress was as good as gold if the young woman could get at her past so substantial an obstacle as Ditton, who would like to keep her mistress to herself. But good as Lady Ormthwaite was, and worthy—in a sliding-scale of goodness—as was her subordinate, there was nothing to prevent the place being deadly dull to the poor little thing as it was

often to Greg himself. She was rather a pretty little girl, in her fair-haired, smart fashion. He liked fair, smart little women. Greg was neither dark nor huge, though he was brown and tanned, and a bundle of well-packed sinews; but he was incorrigibly careless in his dress, which probably rendered him more appreciative of what he called "smartness" in women.

This girl seemed to see something in him which took her fancy, little as there was about him to attract a girl, and he would have liked, in his good-nature, as a response to the compliment she had paid him, to be kind to her, to draw her out a bit, and give her some amusement. As for harm—who thought of harm? Not he. He would not do anything to hurt her—a simple, coquettish little goose of a girl like that!—for the kingdom of Britain.

In reality Lydia had been very much astonished when she was told that the brown, rough-looking young man, whose shooting-coat was the shabbiest in the field, and his gaiters only less disreputable than his knickerbockers, was Mr. Greg Ormthwaite, Sir Gregory's cousin, who, until this year, had been confidently reckoned the future master of the manor-house. Lydia's curiosity, always rampant, was keenly piqued by this extraordinary type of young gentleman—not half so sleek and well combed and brushed outwardly, or with such an air, at once affable and desirous of pleasing, as distinguished the young gentlemen behind the counter at Crowther's.

It was rather to gratify her curiosity than from sheer giddiness and folly that Lydia provoked more than one or two meetings with the squire's cousin. But when she found that the attraction was mutual, that the rough diamond, Mr. Greg Ormthwaite, was so taken with her that he turned and looked after her, and would have spoken to her if he had not been hindered by his bashfulness—for here was another marvel! Mr. Greg Ormthwaite was a trifle sheepish to girls whatever he might be to gentlemen like himself—that instant her vanity and her small yet soaring ambition flew sky-high.

“I say, I beg your pardon. You have dropped something, Miss—Miss Atkins,” stammered Greg, following Lydia one drab afternoon, in an out-of-the-way corner of the grounds, near a pond where he had fished when he was a boy, and also near an old dairy. It had been set aside till recently, when it was again put in use during the pulling down and rebuilding on a more convenient scale—with steam appliances and ice-house, and every modern improvement—of the dairy which had superseded the older structure. Greg's face as he spoke was purple, dyed with a far deeper blush than was reflected in the rosy red in Lydia's round cheeks.

“Lydia Atkins, if you please, sir,” said Lydia, letting her eyes fall at the same time. “Yes, it was my cuff as slipped off, and I have to thank you very much for picking it up, since t'other cuff would have been no good without its feller. Mrs. Ditton is partial to linen collars and cuffs. I do think they are better than paper or vulcanite; they

are genteeler, though the others are what the gentlemen on the road, and our young ladies at Crowther's that are stinted in their washing allowance, mostly takes to. Linen ain't so much better than paper and vulcanite in the matter of getting rasping when it begins to fray at the edges."

He was most completely and excitingly at sea as to what she could mean. Were "gentlemen on the road"—her version of commercial travellers—foot-pads? Who could the unfortunate young ladies be who were so abominably treated as to be stinted in their washing allowance? He did not know what to say, and contented himself with a grin and a cut from the stick in his hand at a wandering thistle, which is always a safe answer.

"I am Lady Ormthwaite's new maid, sir," Lydia went on to explain, with cheerful alacrity and her customary flow of words. She had no conception that there was anything derogatory to her in the position. On the contrary, she was inclined to plume herself upon it, and certainly her unvarnished statement did her no harm with Greg.

"I hope you like the place," he took it upon him to say.

"Pretty well, sir. Everybody treats me fair, and Lady Ormthwaite is kind, though I think she may have strict notions."

"Oh, but you must mind and do what she tells you," replied Greg, playing the mentor without any feigning, and rather enjoying the office. "I know her, and can assure you she is a ripping trump."

"I means to mind her," said Lydia, virtuously,

without exhibiting a tendency to be taken aback by a style of language which was not to be found in any accredited dictionary, and might have startled the Heneage girls, in spite of their small attempts at slang.

"But what I feels most"—Lydia continued her confidences—"is the lonesomeness—in such a part as this, now ; me that was always used to pavement and gas-lamps."

"Oh, come now, you must not be a blooming cockney !" cried Greg. The two had been standing still till now, when he turned and walked with her, as if to lend her the support of his presence in the "lonesomeness." "I own it is infer—deuced—oh, you know what I mean—dull ; but only a cockney would count it lonely."

"I ain't a cockney, sir." Lydia ventured to contradict the gentleman flatly ; for, notwithstanding his rough exterior and his sheepishness, she recognized that he was accessible and quite obliging. "But I'm town bred," she mentioned, with conscious pride, "and I'm such a timid little thing ;" and she hung her pert little head with insinuating helplessness.

"Hanged nonsense !" growled Greg ; but it was a gentle growl, and he excused himself the next moment. "I did not mean to be rude, you know. I'm a bit of a bear, I'm afraid. But what is the use of being a fool of a coward when you can pluck up a spirit and behave like a man—a woman, I mean—a woman of a sensible sort ? Besides, there ain't anything to be frightened of. There are no

longer wolves and wild cattle prowling about in England—the more's the pity, for a beggar who likes a shot. Why, there ain't anything but sinners of frogs in this corner ;” and he carelessly indicated the pond with his stick.

“Oh, oh, Mr. Greg Ormthwaite !” Lydia uttered a positive screech of genuine horror, and scuttled to his side.

“Why, what the dickens is the matter now ? You ain't frightened at a frog, Miss Atkins ?”

“I am, I am !” whimpered Lydia, piteously. “If there are mortal things I can't abide, they are them toads. I'll die, I know I will, if I put my foot on one.”

“Rot ! you'll do nothing of the kind. They are regular spotted beauties, if you come to look at them close. You ought to make their acquaintance ;” and the boyish inclination crossed his mind to find a specimen, and follow and tease her with it, while she sidled and wriggled in that diverting way she had, or rushed to him and clutched him, beseeching him to drop the inoffensive creature. Poor Greg could romp—great boy that he was—though he was out in the cold in intellectual discussions. “And what the thunder would you do if you chanced on an adder ?” he suggested, mischievously, for his better information with regard to the tactics of girls like Lydia.

“Oh, sir, sir, don't speak of it !” and the girl paled and shuddered in such terror that he was smitten with remorse for his cruelty.

“Tut ! I was a brute for frightening you. There

ain't any adders here that I ever heard of, any more than there are boa-constrictors."

"Boas!" cried Lydia, catching at the familiar word, and recovering her spirits at a bound. "I should think I know enough about boas. There ain't any harm in them, only they are hawful dear if the fur ain't imitation."

"Don't jaw me," said Greg, by no means objecting to the operation, and, in fact, feeling it decidedly titillating on the sombre afternoon; "but I bear no malice. I'm hoping all the while I haven't scared you from facing the frogs another time. Do you often toddle in this direction?"

"Most days," said Lydia, demurely. "It is my lady's orders that I put in an appearance regular at this here dairy for a glass of milk. My constitution is delicate; I'm troubled with a churchyard cough."

"Bosh! you were as lively as a cricket about the frogs a minute ago."

"Lor'! don't speak of them, sir. I'll be all in a twitter again in no time."

Thus Lydia Atkins gave Greg Ormthwaite a rendezvous, of which he was at liberty to avail himself when he had nothing else to do.

#### XIV

"I COULD recommend him confidently, sir. He's up to a wrinkle or two, the fellow is. He knows a mighty deal more than those thumping old fogys who are supposed to be at the head of their profession."

The speaker was Greg Ormthwaite, the listener was Sir Gregory ; the scene of the conversation was just outside a loose box in the manor-house stables ; the cause of the amnesty—nay, of the temporary alliance between the cousins—was the sudden and alarming illness of the best horse in the stables, Sir Gregory's principal hunter—for he still hunted, and had not yet descended to a cob—"Black Beauty the second," of illustrious descent, and of merits equal to her pedigree. The horse's master would not have taken a couple of thousands for her, and in the face of the threatened calamity, neither the dry distance at which Sir Gregory had been holding Greg, nor the sulky obduracy with which Greg had been enduring his cousin's disapprobation, could stand its ground any longer. Where a horse like Black Beauty was in danger, Greg was ready to make any amends for an offence he could not help, to grovel in the dirt if necessary, in order to buy a right to save the noble animal, or to pay



back the boss for his mingled enmity and generosity.

Sir Gregory was not quite so reckless in his acceptance of Greg's propitiation. He could not resist having a dig at the foe, even when he acceded to the proposal.

"I am the more inclined to take your advice, sir"—Sir Gregory was apt to address his cousin as "sir"—"since, if your opinion is not to be trusted to where a horse and a vet are concerned, I am at a loss to know when it will hold water. You may wire for this provincial genius—this Rogers, if you think he can be of use; but I must confess I have more faith in the 'old fogys' whom you, and lads like you, affect to despise, than in any of the young bloods—veterinary or otherwise—whom it is your pleasure to patronize."

"Oh, confound it! never mind me and the 'old fogys,'" cried Greg, in his excited impatience. "Think of your precious beast. A man won't see a third Black Beauty in one lifetime—a mare that never shirked the crumbling sides of a ditch or a rotten rail since she came out of the breeder's hands. She can run like blazes without turning a hair. She suits you to a T. The good creature never minds an additional stone or two of weight any more than if she were an elephant. She is an A1; take my word for it. I can tell you I was in a blue funk when I saw her this morning. Sam durst not touch her all last night, and she would no more swallow the balls that idiot Baird left for her than she would munch her truss of hay or her

measure of oats, like a lady. But if Jim Rogers reaches her in time, he may do something. He brought round Jackass when she was snorting like a unicorn."

"Do unicorns snort?" Sir Gregory was unable to keep from interjecting, sceptically.

"Oh, hang them! don't they?—and charge with their horns too, unless there is a blessed lot of lies told about them. I'm off to the station, Sir Gregory. I'll wire and wait the answer, and bring back Rogers if he is to be had for love or money."

The young provincial vet, who had established a reputation in certain circles, was sufficiently disengaged to obey the summons. He arrived in due time with Greg, who put the horse in the trap, which bore the two at such a pace that it seemed to the alarmed spectators two men's lives were risked for the life of a horse. But while Greg looked as if he were flying over the splash-board as he lashed his whip into a tangle, had his arms nearly pulled from their sockets, and shouted till he was hoarse to maintain the animal's headlong career, the red-haired, ruddy-faced, neatly dressed young man beside him leaned back in his corner with his arms crossed. He was master of the situation. If his companion chose to give himself all this trouble, and to work himself into a fine frenzy, it was nothing to the vet. If it amused the gentleman who indulged in the demonstration, let him have the amusement. It did no harm even to the horse, who ought to have the first word to say against the liberty taken with him. But he was

1

not goaded more than he could bear. Mr. Greg Ormthwaite had a method in his madness. With all the turmoil, of which he was at present the centre, he managed to respect the quadruped's flanks, neck, and ears. In return, the horse warmed to his work, and treated the scamper more as if it were a good piece of fun than anything else. As for the old women at the cottage doors, who did not often have the excitement of a sensational spectacle, they blinked their interest, while the children skipped and danced out of the way and cheered their appreciation of the scattered flints and pebbles.

Mrs. Ditton and Lydia were engaged in turning out the contents of some boxes in a room at the back of the house, which commanded the road to the stables. Lydia, glad of any diversion from the occupation on hand, scandalized her senior by starting up, running to the window, flinging it open, and hanging out of it to ascertain the cause of the noise.

"Oh, dear, Mrs. Ditton, come and see! That horse has run away as sure as fate. There will be a spill, and bones broke, if the driver don't take care."

Lydia was viewing the probable casualty with decided philosophy, rather relishing the excitement, indeed, like the old women at the cottage doors. All at once she flung up her arms with a stifled cry, covered her face with her hands, and swung to and fro in her horror.

"Bless us and save us, Miss Atkins, what do ail

you?" protested Ditton, in a mixture of alarm and annoyance, as she rose stiffly and came to the window. "You'll be down in the court next if you don't take care. What do possess you to fly like a child to look at a runaway horse if you can't stand the sight? There hasn't been no upset; they're making for the gate"—peering out at the rushing dog-cart—"and they'll take it right enough. The horse knows his stable, and will pull up in a minute."

"Oh, he'll be killed, he'll be killed before my eyes!" moaned Lydia, as if "before my eyes" put the finishing touch to the tragedy. "Save him! Will nobody save him?" and she wrung her hands.

"*Him!*" cried Mrs. Ditton, indignantly. "I'd just like you to tell me, miss, who it is as you're making so free with, himming in that easy manner. I would have you know it is Mr. Greg as is driving that 'ere horse. There! If I thought it was him you was meaning, I wouldn't have nought to do with you, neither would my lady;" and Mrs. Ditton glanced keenly and suspiciously at Lydia.

At another time the girl would have risen to the bait, at any hazard, without heeding the exposure of her giddy folly. She would have giggled defiantly and cried, "Oh, wouldn't you, ma'am, and no more would he, I suppose? Better ask him, and see what he says." But now she was too overwhelmed, too much in earnest, with all the vulgar boldness and skittishness crushed out of her.

"Oh, never mind Mr. Greg," she cried, impa-

tiently. "Let him take his chance. It is *him—him!*"

"Is the girl off her head?" demanded the exasperated Mrs. Ditton. "Who's the 'him' she's raving about? I declare if it ain't the strange vet, unless it is all a piece of play-acting. I'll tell you what, Miss Atkins; if you don't compose yourself and behave like a rational Christian, I'll ring the bell for Tolley, or anybody as is about. I ain't going to fight single-handed with a girl as takes it upon her to go off into tantrums at a runaway horse."

But by the time Mrs. Ditton finished her sentence the beat of the horse's hoofs and the rattle of the dog-cart's wheels had slackened and rounded themselves off into a natural and peaceful termination of the race. It was clear, even to a novice, that the horse was stopping at its stable door, and that the men behind it were about to alight without damage, amidst a subdued murmur of voices.

Lydia stared about her, gulped down a sob, drew back, pushed her fingers through her disarranged fringe, and then began to stroke and pat that much-prized, troublesome appendage into restored order.

"You are right, Mrs. Ditton," she said, drawing a long breath. "I was in a tantrum. I believe I do go off my head a bit at times when I sees a carriage overturned or a 'orse come down on its knees. Such 'orrid accidents do happen at times. I beg your pardon, ma'am; I'm sorry as I've put you about."

"I excuse you for this once, Miss Atkins," said Mrs. Ditton, with considerable formality. "Human nature is weak, which I don't deny; but I beg you won't do it again. It ain't good manners, and it is ill-convenient for a young person in service to be subject to tantrums or ecstasies, or whatever you like to call them. I would not answer for the consequences if you were took with an attack before Lady Ormthwaite, in the delicate state her ladyship is in. So you'll be careful, and mind what you're about"—Mrs. Ditton wound up her sentence—"or I'll never forgive myself for not having reported your weakness at once, and had you put out of the way of doing harm. There is sickness enough in the house already, without a girl as is given to fits coming into it."

"I ain't given to fits," Lydia denied, angrily. "I never had a fit in my life. It was only—"

"Hold your tongue, Miss Atkins," Mrs. Ditton ordered imperiously, "and don't make matters no worse by speaking again to an upper servant as is set over you."

There could not have been a greater contrast between two men than that between Greg Ormthwaite and the young vet. Greg was a gentleman who had kicked the traces, spurned the civilization of the last centuries, run amuck at polite usages, and learned to hate, with a young man's frantic violence and desperate doggedness, what he called the shams, and wiser people than he termed the prudent precautions, delicate reserves, and fine distinctions of an elaborate code of manners.

Jim Rogers was, so far, a self-made man, who valued beyond everything—almost beyond his singular native skill and remarkable talent—all that he had acquired in the matter of education and training. He had not come from the gutter; he had been a farmer's son, but he had found that he had a great deal to learn both in general knowledge and decorous behavior. He did with all his might what his hand found to do, and was devoted to his business both from education and principle. He was as well groomed as the horses under his care. His red hair was cropped in the closest crop. His face and hands had always the freshness of a recent ablution. He was neat to dapperness in his person, though he was above the middle height. He affected something of the professional air of a medical man, rather than of the flashy swagger of a jockey, in his quiet necktie and tall hat. He spoke the best of Queen's English, unless an objection might be taken to his use of long words. His cards were inscribed "Mr. James Rogers," followed by those letters of the alphabet which signified the distinctions he had won at his veterinary college. He was a model of respectable conventionality to a degree far beyond that of any of the old fogys whom Greg had taken it upon him to despise.

There was only one hole in Rogers's armor. He had, when he first left his veterinary college, and was doing a little farrier practice in the neighborhood of Burntwood, before he had worked the cures and accomplished the feats which were procuring for him the reputation of a second Rainy,

lost his heart to a butterfly of a girl at Crowther's, the large linen-draper's in the town. Love had blinded him in part, while she had appeared to him, in contrast to his heavy, homely sisters, a paragon of smartness and elegance. He had overlooked, or disdained to take into account, her silliness and conceit. With the resolution and constancy which formed so strong an element in his character, he had condoned her faults and been true to her, until some offence, more heinous than any which had gone before it, against those proprieties which were as dear to him, in his masterful, mainly nature, as to many a weak, finicking woman, awoke his wrath, and occasioned a quarrel between him and Lydia. It remained to be seen whether honest, ardent affection or justifiable resentment would carry the day; and whether Jim Rogers's fidelity to his standards would be enlisted on the side of his attachment or would be ranged against it.



## XV


AFTER a short examination of the patient, during which Black Beauty, half-mad with the anguish of a suffering animal, submitted like a lamb to the vet's clear-sighted, light-handed, cool and careful inspection, Jim Rogers told Sir Gregory clearly and concisely, in spite of the Latin definitions the practitioner was fond of giving, the consequences, and even the particulars, of an accident which the mare's master knew she had met with six months before. It had been thought that the misadventure had been successfully dealt with at the time and had left no bad effects behind it. Rogers showed, on the contrary, the damaging results which had ensued. These would culminate before long in a fatal issue if the splendid and cherished animal were not subjected to a rigorous course of treatment, the success of which demanded both time and patience.

Sir Gregory listened with conviction, remarked upon the curious *rapport* between the man and the beast, and, to Greg's triumph, retained Rogers, at a high fee, as surgeon-in-chief to superintend the process of cure, and to come down to Ormthwaite Manor from wherever he was staying for the time when he thought his presence necessary. Rogers

could not stay for more than the night at the manor-house, which was fortunate perhaps, since, though he was perfectly civil to the servants and was above giving himself airs, he had managed to convey the fact that the second table was not the place for a man who had been to college, and had lunched once and again with a horsy young peer. Mr. Jim Rogers had to feed by himself in the business-room. This circumstance, though it was very regrettable to one person in the house, deeply impressed that person's rampant imagination.

Rogers must have had some ground for guessing that Lydia Atkins might be under the same roof with him, but he made no sign of recognition beyond a curtly civil "Good-morning" when Lydia herself contrived that the two should come face to face in a corridor, so that there was no question of an encounter. The truth was that he was still nursing his anger, while he had not yet made up his mind what his future conduct to Lydia should be.

Lydia, in her unbounded vanity, had, after she had recovered from the shock of suddenly seeing her estranged lover in what she judged was a situation of imminent danger, rashly leaped to the exultant conclusion that he had come to Ormthwaite Manor in pursuit of her. She would sooner have believed him guilty of the baseness of somehow compassing the distress and danger of Black Beauty—for Lydia's creed was unreservedly in favor of stratagems being allowable in love and war—than have



credited that his visit to Ormthwaite bore no reference to her.

Already there had been a scene in Lady Ormthwaite's dressing-room, to which Lydia had gone soon after Rogers's dramatic arrival, in order to take the place of Ditton, who had been called away for the moment, at their mistress's toilet.

It was always a trial to Honor—a trial which she had brought upon herself, which she had forced herself to bear—to receive Lydia's little services and attentions. If she was to atone in any measure, if she was to watch over the girl and do her good, she must have a certain familiarity with her, she must learn to know her thoughts and ways. At this point she generally stopped to ask herself, Who and what was she to presume to shrink from the creature she had deeply injured, or even to propose at this late date to benefit her?

In the middle of the ordeal Lydia's presence was not altogether without a stimulating, enlivening effect. She was amusing in her self-revelations, if a mother were at liberty to be amused by the absurdities of her child. She was kind in a superficial, rudimentary way, still it was careless kindness. This morning she had come in beaming and sparkling in a manner which added greatly to her childish prettiness. She wore one of her brown holland gowns which Lady Ormthwaite had given her, with the linen collars and cuffs on which Ditton insisted. Ditton would also have condemned the fringe if Lady Ormthwaite would have indorsed the condemnation. But Honor had a strong impression

that Lydia would have found hardly more difficulty in laying her head on the block than in consenting to the cutting off of her fringe.

There was another detail on which the two maids squabbled perennially. Ditton objected absolutely to a certain cairngorm brooch, ruby ring, and silver bangle with which Lydia itched to adorn her person. By hook or by crook she frequently contrived to figure in them, keeping the first half hidden by her collar, the second in the shelter of the finger of a glove, ostensibly worn to protect a cut finger, and the third pushed well up her sleeve. The brooch and the ring, or, rather, the ingenious arrangements which veiled them, were not in evidence to-day; but there was a substitute for the bangle, at which Honor stared in fascination. She could not be mistaken! The string of black-and-gold beads peeping out under the edge of Lydia's cuff consisted of half a dozen of Honor's old grandfather's "buttons," by the aid of which a devout Spanish donna had once repeated her "Aves" and "Paternosters" in a South American cathedral.

While Lydia was shaking out Honor's skirts and rearranging the lace at her throat and wrists, the girl was taking upon her to enlarge to her mistress, in a tone of personal pride, on what she could have told Sir Gregory as to the certain cure of his horse.

"Mr. Jim Rogers will set her up in no time, my lady. Why, I've knowed him bring round a dog as had not a hair on his back with the red mange, and a cat as purred that hoarse with the diphtheria, for all the world like a poor, dear baby. Pussy was

always wanting to rub against her doctor after he made her well. I could have told Sir Gregory as how Mr. Jim Rogers was his bargain."

"What, Lydia!" said Lady Ormthwaite, with a faint smile. "Do you mean you are like the little Israelitish maid in the Bible, who told the wife of the great Syrian captain that there was a prophet in Samaria who could make Naaman whole from his leprosy?"

But, alas! Lydia's reading had been more in the direction of "penny dreadfuls" and "halfpenny novelettes" than of Bible histories, though she did signify, with a supercilious sniff of her pert little nose, that she had heard something of the kind when she was a child at "Sunday-school."

"What I mean is that the gentleman as is going to put Black Beauty right in a jiffy is an old acquaintance of mine. I could have told all about him, of course, for I may say we was intimate friends;" and Lydia bridled significantly.

"What! Lydia friends with a vet?" burst from Lady Ormthwaite before she knew what she was saying. For why, in the name of wonder, should Job Clay's daughter not be acquainted with a vet, or with some man in a far humbler and more objectionable line of life?

It was only a thrill of that sense of incongruity which was apt to assail Honor in relation to Lydia. Honor was tempted to confuse it with that strange thrill of motherhood she had been led to expect. Yet it seemed hardly possible that any motherhood, however crushed down and turned aside, could as-

sert itself in a *mal à propos* instinct of humor dashed with annoyance.

Lydia was decidedly affronted by Lady Ormthwaite's exclamation, while she was prepared with a voluble explanation.

"He ain't a common vet," she asserted. "His people are farmers. I was invited to spend a day with his father and mother and sisters at their farm-house. I assure you, my lady, they are quite well-to-do, with cows, and sheep, and pigs—no end to them. And oh, my! what junket we had, and such cream and butter as you never seed! And what fun we had, being weighed in the barn and sliding down the haycocks!—not that Mr. Jim Rogers did more than look on. Goodness gracious! he would not even stoop to romping! He's a regular rising young man, and there weren't a young lady at Crowther's as wouldn't have been proud to walk out with him."

Lady Ormthwaite had recovered her gravity and her prudence.

"Well, Lydia," she said, "if this veterinary surgeon is an old acquaintance and friend of yours, you must remember he has come here on Sir Gregory's business, and you must not be forward to put yourself in his way. You must conduct yourself with the discretion which is always looked for in a nicely behaved young woman."

"Yes, Lady Ormthwaite," answered Lydia, with great docility; but her eyes were dancing, and she was saying to herself, "As if I did not know on what business Jim Rogers was come! For though

he is a gentleman, as good as any, and no mistake, and a cut above everybody, save them gentlefolks themselves, I should like to see the gentlefolks as could keep him and me apart. Mr. Greg and me has had one or two games, and has throwed dust in some folk's eyes ; but Mr. Greg is small beer, though he is a gentleman born and bred, to a rising young vet as is that spruce and clever, and talks that fine, as if he were reading out of a book. He'll let that old frump, Ditton, and that daddy-long-legs, Tolley, see what we can do."

It was in this exalted, hilarious mood that the girl met Rogers, when he looked her over coolly, and barely acknowledged her effusive greeting.

She was cut to the heart—the poor little heart, in its wild flutter of vanity, hope, and desire. If it had ever been touched and called out of its sordid environment of low ideals, mean, self-seeking, and vulgar rivalries, into a higher, purer atmosphere of genuine regard, it had been touched and called by Jim Rogers.

The result, where the girl was in question, was peculiar, and led to odd consequences. She was struck down for a second, but she rose again the next instant. She sprang up with the elasticity of a buoyant temper. She appeared to submit to the distant terms on which it seemed to be the rising young man's choice that they should stand towards each other. His choice might very well have been mistaken for what it was not—a time-serving relinquishment of an alliance which was now beneath Rogers's growing deserts. The raw

Burntwood farrier had been well enough matched with a girl in Crowther's shop; the gifted, cosmopolitan veterinary surgeon, who had already won his spurs, and felt himself destined to gather more and higher-reaching laurels, was not to be fitly coupled with a waiting-maid at Ormthwaite Manor. His treatment of her bore that explanation on the face of it, though it had no foundation in Jim Rogers's motives.

Lydia could not tell whether her lover had not given her up because she was no longer good enough for him. But she thought not, in the correct instinct within her, which recalled at once the man's stability of character, her old power over him, and his power over her. In comparison with it her romping flirtation with Mr. Greg Ormthwaite, though it flattered her vanity hugely and tickled her ignorant ambition, did not weigh a feather's weight in the balance. Then she told herself, with a toss of her head, she did not care whether Jim Rogers thought her beneath him or not; she would not be thrown over in this fashion. If he still bore malice against her she would bring him to a better frame of mind. She had no delicacy to hinder her in the contest; but if she had no delicacy she had cunning. She was not a bad girl in the ordinary acceptation of the word. Her very shallowness and conceit had aided all that was better in her. Her kindness, her candor, which existed side by side with her cunning; her easy good-humor, which prevented her from being caught up and carried away by gusts of passion; the rudimentary princi-



ples she had acquired, which kept her from gratuitous lying, from small pilfering and habitual cheating—had all combined to preserve her virtue. But she would not be beaten by Jim Rogers, and she would retain the two strings to her bow. She had ascertained that Rogers was coming again, possibly a good many times, to Ormthwaite Manor. She would have time and opportunity to break down his surliness. He was in a rage still. To think he could keep up a grudge so long! and all she had done to offend him was to be civil to one of the gentlemen on the road, whose “rounds” in travelling for a hosiery factory brought him twice a year to Burntwood. She must pay Jim out some day for his grumpy temper, or there would be no chance of peace left to her. In the meantime, if she was to play off Mr. Greg against Mr. Rogers, and Jim Rogers against Mr. Greg, she must be very careful.

The nature of Lydia’s carefulness was shown by her snatching five minutes in the course of the morning to write to Mr. Greg, and to put the letter where he, and he alone, would find it. She had neither received a letter from Greg, nor had she written to him before.

Greg, coming in from the stables and repairing to his room, took up the letter which was awaiting him, and read it with the utmost surprise, and, to tell the truth, with the reverse of satisfaction. His own handwriting and orthography were bad enough (Jim Rogers wrote a hand like copper-plate, and spelled as if he had entered the lists at a spelling-bee), but Greg’s attempts were the scrawl and the

spelling of a boor evolved from a gentleman, while poor Lydia's effusion, in spite of her Board School, and the accounts she had been obliged to note down at Crowther's, was another affair. It was written on pink paper, and in her agitation the writing ran slantways. She had been accustomed to jot down certain articles and certain figures at Crowther's, and with pain and labor she had learned to perform her task with sufficient decency for her to be able to read what she had written, and to submit the list to another shopman, or shopwoman—shopman, if possible—without incurring the censure of the authorities, or provoking the ridicule of the shop world. But when she was withdrawn from the familiar piece of routine her pen and memory alike ran riot. She employed capitals and stops according to an entirely new method—

"DEAR SIR [she wrote], i must ask if you will be good enuff not to let out to Mr. Jim Rogers as how you and me 'as had walks and talks together, wen i was going to the diary for my Glas of milk. This ain't because Mr. Jim Rogers 'as a 'old over me, but just because us has been Friends, from me knowing his sisters, and that he is lawful strait-laced in his opinions.

"i remain your obedient servant and if you don't count it Presumision—friend,

"LYDIA ATKINS."

"The little idiot!" fumed Greg. "I'm blowed if she don't think me capable of going and speaking of her to the vet! She has been trying it on with him too, it seems. I should have thought Rogers too sharp-witted for such play—that it was only a

thick-headed ass like me who took to it. I'll see if I cannot fall in with my gushing friend this very afternoon, and haul her over the coals while I can, before she plays further mischief. She is a funny little thing, and game in her way, but she ain't going to cut capers at my expense, writing precious letters and getting herself and me into a deuce of a scrape for her own ends," cried Greg, shaking himself.

Greg was as good as his word. There had been no shooting that day on account of Black Beauty's condition, and since Sir Gregory had taken the vet out of Greg's hands, Greg had been finding the time hang heavily on his hands.

The days were drawing in. It was dusk some time before dinner, a state of matters which, if it rendered clandestine meetings in out-of-the-way places in the grounds more difficult and more compromising, in another light made them more practicable. The earlier twilight had brought to an end Lydia's well-timed airings and milk-drinkings; but there were always specious excuses in errands to the village and the offices, especially on mild evenings like this one, when the girl had a good guess that Mr. Greg would be about and would seek her out.

The pair met accordingly, Greg with clumsy remonstrances and warnings, Lydia with shrill protests and eager apologies, ending, in the shaken state of her nerves, with a noisy fit of crying. In the back parlor of bar-room sets to which Greg had descended, to snatch a hug or a kiss in a *tête-à-tête*

between a young man and a young woman was little more than the current coin of intercourse, like an interchange of glances and gentle hand-pressures in higher regions. There was the kiss boisterous, for which the young man felt bound to struggle when the girl was saucy; and there was the kiss consolatory when she was vexed and in tears. After his "Come now, don't blubber," Greg, who hated scenes, and could not stand tears, administered the kiss consolatory, starting back and looking round in the act, because he heard a footstep drawing near, and at the same instant Mr. Jim Rogers came round a big holly bush.

Jim Rogers had repented already of his reception of Lydia Atkins's overtures. After he had paid another visit to Black Beauty, and had another interview with Sir Gregory, and was sufficiently disengaged to attend to his own concerns, he made a few cautious inquiries of one of the servants with regard to a former acquaintance of his, Miss Atkins, who was living at the manor. In accordance with the answers he received, he decided to take a stroll with his cigar—he had renounced a clay pipe just when Greg Ormthwaite had taken to one. He arrived on the spot before Greg could remove his arm from Lydia's shoulder, while he and she became aware simultaneously of a third person's presence.

Jim Rogers lifted his hat with punctilious politeness. His face grew white with passion; and Jim Rogers's fresh-colored face thus blanched was not pleasant to see.

"I wish you a very good evening, Miss Atkins," he said, with a sneer. "I am sorry I have intruded inopportunately. I say the same to you, sir"—to Greg; and, without waiting for an answer, the vet walked on.

"The brute!" panted Lydia.

"The insolent brute!" growled Greg.

## XVI

“A LIVING mother and a living child.” There was no misadventure there; for though the heir resolved himself into an heiress, Sir Gregory Ormthwaite counted himself a man whom Providence had so loaded with blessings, far beyond his deserts, that he turned about in his mind what thank-offering he could make, like a devout Jew of old, or a Christian king showering down amnesties and largesses as a token of gratitude for his accession to a throne. The church, which under active and liberal church-wardens—of whom Sir Gregory was one—had long ago had everything done to it in the way of restoration; the schools, which needed no addition; the hospital, which was just completed; the well-cared-for poor; his tenants, who, please God, would one day be his little daughter’s tenants; the halt, the deaf, the blind on his estate—whom could he most certainly benefit without the danger of committing an injury where he desired to confer a boon?

Ah, there was Greg, the young beggar! He was not so heartless, so abandoned to self-indulgence and to the coarser pleasures he could find for himself as his cousin had feared. Greg had written the moment he had received the great news, both

to his cousin and to Lady Ormthwaite, sorry enough letters in the matter of literary composition, but letters through which something more than intellect and education shone. And there was Honor keeping the boy's letter under her pillow, and saying with glistening eyes that nothing had afforded her more satisfaction since God had given her a baby to put in her husband's arms, and since she felt she was to be permitted to live for the two. Something — something far beyond the allowance, that had turned out a mere trap in which to catch idle, lounging habits — must be thought of for Greg, to make up to him for the loss of the fine inheritance he was taking with a magnanimity and sweet-bloodedness which did him the greatest credit. Sir Gregory could not conceive what form the indemnification was to take, unless it was to consist of the alienating of a part of the estate in Greg's favor. This was a step from which, like most hereditary land-owners, he shrank, as if he were robbing his daughter, who cared for nothing at this moment save the nest of her mother's breast.

There was another less trying alternative. The reparation might take the shape of the purchase of a ranch, such as Mrs. Daintrey had bought for her son.

Anyway, Greg should be invited down for the christening. Nay, why not ask him to stand as the godfather? It was a relation in which he might certainly look a little out of place, but, with all his follies, he had done nothing to disqualify him for

the office. When it came to that, he would be the child's nearest relative, after her parents had paid the debt of nature; and the responsibility, while it showed the confidence they retained in him, might help to steady the lad. At that moment Sir Gregory Ormthwaite, wise and experienced man of the world as he was, felt tempted to consider contact with an infant a great regenerating lever of society.

Honor, lying in the bliss of her motherhood, could not avoid contrasting the entrance into the world of her second child with the entrance of the first. Here she lay in her spacious bedroom, surrounded with every luxury she could crave, guarded from every breath of wintry air, every jarring sound, every exertion on her part which could be too much for her. Within easy reach of her was that dainty bassinette of silk and lace which Lady Mary Heneage had begged to be allowed to present to the little stranger, and in it, enveloped in cambric and lace, lay the baby heiress of Ormthwaite Manor, for whom Honor could think only one Christian name good enough—not her own name, though Sir Gregory would have liked that—it was that of “Marcia,” which had been borne by his mother. She had been a woman at once stately and tender, whose memory was still fragrant in the old places her feet had trodden; and when Gregory Ormthwaite looked at and touched his and Honor's child, it was with the fond reverence—almost with the awe, though the sadness was converted into gladness—with which he had drawn near to his



mother in the last unconscious sleep, the precursor of the sounder sleep of death. Now—

“Another Mary Green had come to Goldielea;”

another Marcia Ormthwaite was to dwell and reign in Ormthwaite Manor-house. He had not dared for many a year to dream so sweet a dream of what should be the glory of his age.

Away in the village of Hayes, a miserable young woman, fainting for lack of the commonest nourishment, unless when the charity of her neighbors—poor in their turn—supplied it, had lain on her wretched bed with her face to the wall, not caring to look out on her squalid surroundings—the roof and the walls, with hideous damp-stains, which caused the soiled, torn wall-paper to fall off and rustle uncannily in the draught; the hard daylight from the uncurtained window; and the flickering light of the guttering candle and of the fire, dying in ashes on the unswept hearth. As for the skin-and-bone child, in the coarse makeshift for baby-clothes, lying by her side, and disturbing her with its feeble, irksome wail, the mother’s best wish for it had been that its weak breath would presently cease. What did she want with a child? How could she care for the child of Job Clay? He would come in lurching and leering, half fall over her where she lay, catch up the living bundle by her side, and, when she snatched it out of his grasp, lest it should fall on the broken flags of the floor, have its brains dashed out and its father be hanged for the deed, relinquish it with an oath.

Lady Ormthwaite shuddered, and sought to banish the ghastly vision, which was like a nightmare. Strange to say, what dispelled it most effectually was Lydia's presence, and her attitude towards the sister whom she was never to know as a sister. Lydia had the passion for babies which is incidental to some young girls—not necessarily to the most amiable, still less to those of the highest moral and intellectual standards, for, in fact, the appetite seems to have a physical rather than a spiritual origin. It is a taste for babies in the abstract, the younger the better. The girls who have it, as a rule, testify little discrimination. A baby is a baby to them, whether it is pretty or ugly, whether it exercises its lungs in screaming, or puckers its mouth into "a three-cornered smile of bliss." The same girls will, in the course of time, turn their backs on their infant idols after they are grown into wide-awake creatures, observing restlessly, and sending forth sprouting germs of souls. It is the reverse of the process which goes on in an older, wiser generation, which regards the lisping, toddling child—the little man and woman in miniature—as having arrived at the most interesting, engaging age. Baby-worship is one of the inexplicable religions of the world, practised only by women, and chiefly by young girls. Perhaps it is a scheme of grace for those among them who are least susceptible to grace from other quarters.

In the case of Lydia Atkins it struck the unreflecting observer as an unaccountable inconsist-

---

ency ; but there it was for the time, moulding and subduing the girl.

She had, doubtless, exhibited the phase of feeling before in the course of her earlier life, but it was not till she had to do with the Ormthwaite baby that she had dwelt under the same roof and come into constant contact with the object of her craze. Lydia would hang about, heedless of rebuffs for a wasted hour, on the chance of getting the baby to hold, when she would sway herself to and fro, and coo entranced over her burden, her face and voice transfigured for the moment as she gloated over and pointed out the "pretty dear's" manifold perfections—the wonder of its little toes and fingers, the down on its head for hair, the dawning twinkle of its eyes, the tiny curves of its ears. Lydia was fit to strangle Ditton and the nurse because they would not suffer her to take part in the important rites of bathing and dressing the child. The girl whose tongue could with difficulty be stilled, even in the presence of her mistress, who hated being quiet, who would jump and flutter about in season and out of season, would submit to sit as motionless as a statue, in the shaded half-darkness, if only she was suffered to watch baby asleep in her cradle. Lydia would squeeze herself into a corner, and let her best frock be crushed out of shape, simply to have the chance of waiting on baby, as the lowliest of her handmaids.

Honor loved this baby of hers and Sir Gregory's with her whole heart, and for Babe Marcia's sake she would have a softer heart to babies through all

her future years ; but she had not known the girlish, unreasoning passion for any and every baby. Honor had not wanted a baby when she was Lydia's age—the forlorn, embittered girl that she was. She had stinted the baby which came to her, undesired and unwelcome, of a mother's kisses. She never put her lips to Babe Marcia's soft cheeks without feeling the lips stung and blistered by the recollection. She—Honor—had parted from that defrauded child without a pang ; and here was the child, Lydia, grown into a foolish, flighty girl, surreptitiously covering the other child's frock, her boots, her hood, with infatuated kisses. It was a never-ending marvel to Honor, and one which stirred her inexpressibly, and filled her with strange thoughts. It carried her in advance over what might be the far-apart careers of her daughters, Lydia Clay and Marcia Ormthwaite.

The child's christening was deferred until Lady Ormthwaite should have recovered her strength. Winter had come, and Sir Gregory could promise his guests, on the occasion, hunting when the weather was open, and skating and sledging if frost prevailed. Greg was among the friends assembled for the ceremony and the accompanying family festivity.

The party, with the exception of Greg and Lady Mary Heneage, her husband and her daughters—but they only came over from the old hall for the morning, that Lady Mary might assume her responsibilities as one of the godmothers—consisted mostly of staid, elderly people, more or less remote

Ormthwaite connections—one of whom acted as proxy for Mrs. Daintrey in the office of the second godmother—contemporaries of Sir Gregory's. They united in pitying and shaking their heads over Greg, who was a far-away cousin of most of them, who resented alike their pity and their disapprobation. They secretly thought him a poor-spirited simpleton for not having managed to avoid being one of the company, when the youthful heiress, destined to cut him out, was made a Christian. They were of one opinion, that Sir Gregory was betraying a premonition of his coming dotage, instead of furnishing an instance of his old sagacity, in the absurd arrangement by which young Ormthwaite was selected to stand sponsor for his baby cousin.

Greg himself looked and felt like a fish out of the water in the solemn ceremony he had let himself be flattered into taking part in and among the company in which he found himself. He had the greatest difficulty to resist "bolting" on the very morning of the christening. If it had not been for Lady Ormthwaite's kind eyes he would then and there have disgraced himself.

Greg was more at home and better at the dinner given to the tenantry and laborers on the estate, where he could be of use, and where, when horny hands patted him on the shoulder, and quavering voices bade him take heart and not lose courage, but make his own way in the world, as many an Ormthwaite had done before him, and might it be a main prosperous way, he had no sense either of shame or of resentment.

But when the great day was over, during which Sir Gregory and Lady Ormthwaite had made a point of showing Greg special consideration and kindness, and he had to face the rest of the time to which the stay of visitors from a distance extended, he found the tug-of-war harder. No doubt he might have "cut and run" with less opprobrium; but a conspicuous feature in Greg was the mental and moral slowness which balanced the abnormal bodily activity of the modern athlete. He hunted when he could, skated when he could, shot wild ducks when he could, and, as a rule, turned up, where the company was concerned, to the principal meals. He did not invade the library, where the gentlemen congregated to examine the contents of the afternoon's post-bag and to read and discuss their newspapers. He did not ask the ladies, gossiping round the four-o'clock tea-table, to take him into their circle and their confidence, and bestow on him a cup of tea. When dinner was over he took refuge in the smoking-room with the *Field* and *Bell's Life*, and would not be wiled elsewhere either by drawing-room music or by whist-tables.

When Greg was in the house while daylight lasted he would wander disconsolately through the suites of upper rooms not in use, which offered no attraction for ordinary visitors. He might have liked to dawdle a little beside his cousin's wife, and impart to her sympathetic ear some of his troubles and chaotic plans, but what strength she had recovered was expended on entertaining her company.

Theoretically Greg bore nothing save stupid good-will to "the kid" who had eclipsed him, for whose religious and moral upbringing he had recently pledged himself. But practically he had, unlike Lydia Atkins, a horror of babies, so that he did not dream of resorting to the freshly fitted-up nurseries, to which Sir Gregory repaired without being told, morning and evening, beaming, and walking on tiptoe, regardless of his weight, his years, his dignity—an ex-governor's dignity!—or of an occasional fit of the gout.

One afternoon, at his wit's end for amusement, Greg strayed into a remote empty room, where he had once been accustomed to keep his bats and balls. He was taken by surprise to find it lit up by the glow of a fire, and then to discover that Miss Atkins was engaged in ironing on a little table near the hearth. She made some plausible explanation; the fact being that she was surreptitiously doing a little clear-starching and "dressing" of bibs and tuckers she did not choose to give out to the laundress. She had coolly annexed the unoccupied room and lit a fire in the grate—"Just to guard against the damp, sir"—in order to carry out her purpose.

Poor Greg was agreeably excited by the encounter. He remembered Miss Lydia's walks to the old dairy in the course of the autumn, and the small games at odd moments, which had contributed to lighten the dulness of those days when he was not making a "bag" with the other "guns." He had half forgotten the unpleasant *éclaircissement* and

miniature catastrophe, which, however, had come to nothing, at the end of the game.

He obeyed the coquettish welcome of her eyes, went in and sat down on the corner of the ironing-table to inquire for her health, and to ask if she still liked the manor-house. So rapidly did Greg, who was naturally rather bashful than bold towards women, advance in familiarity under Lydia's encouragement, that, presently, he was pretending to steal some of her trumpery, and threatening to administer a shower to her with a handful of water out of the bowl from which she was sprinkling her muslin and imitation lace, while Lydia was protesting, backing, and giggling.



## XVII

BEYOND feeling a little affronted at Greg's detecting her in what Lydia was pleased to regard as a menial occupation, she was delighted to see him again on such terms. Apart from the cult of the baby, she had found no particular entertainment of late. She had been utterly unsuccessful in every attempt she had made to intercept and appease Jim Rogers during his visits to the now convalescent Black Beauty. The *éclat* of the cure and Sir Gregory's handsome checks were all the *douceurs* the vet consented to receive.

Lydia, even with the help of the baby, had been feeling what she called "uncommon low," so that the recovery of one of the strings to her bow was keenly appreciated by her. Besides, the honor—poor Lydia!—of having such an admirer, and the airy castles which she began on the instant to build of his being wheedled into marrying her and making her a lady, there was the revenge on Jim Rogers of a punishment to which she could not, in spite of his cruel conduct, allow herself to believe that he would be absolutely indifferent. There was also the delight in a secret and a plot, together with the hankering after forbidden fruit, strong in a girl like Lydia.

Accordingly the play and the "jaw"—the plebeian substitute for badinage—were resumed, and when for a moment they languished, Lydia filled up the interval by ecstatically enlarging on—of all subjects in the world—the perfections of the Ormthwaite baby, and by roundly abusing Greg for not discovering them for himself, and making the most of them during his stay at Ormthwaite.

"Not to have put a finger on the pretty dear, the innocent pet! Why, what are you made of? What are you thinking of, sir? You may not see a baby like that again in the whole course of your life."

Greg shrugged his shoulders and ducked his head, as if to escape from an anticipated blow. He professed to detest and despise all babies, and this baby above all. He feigned to be jealous of the praise she lavished upon it, and called upon her, with the utmost rudeness, "to shut up." He pursued her with the bowl of water, and suggested to her to dip her fringe into it, in order to improve its curl; while all the time he was thinking what a good-hearted young woman she must be at bottom, to be so fond of a sprawling, screeching brat.

In the middle of the bantering, scolding, scuffling which the pair contrived to get up, neither of them heard a foot in the adjoining corridor, not even though Greg had left the room door ajar.

The couple were equally oblivious the next afternoon, though two pairs of feet passed along the corridor, and actually paused for an instant at the slightly open door, when Lydia was in the act of

sewing on half-a-dozen buttons. Greg had wantonly hacked them off his gloves and the wrists and breast of his shirt, for no other reason than that their forcible removal might furnish Lydia with an occupation in replacing them, and might lend him an excuse for his grossly impertinent proposal to reward her with a kiss for every button she restored.

Righteous retribution overtook the culprits without another day's reprieve. Lady Ormthwaite was well enough to be approached, if necessary, with unpleasant news.

"My lady, you can testify as to how I have never been no tale-bearer nor no strife-breeder," Mrs. Ditton appealed to her mistress, with alarming solemnity, in the privacy of Lady Ormthwaite's dressing-room. "But even though I does make dispeace against my will, tale-bearing and strife-breeding is one thing, and the credit of an honorable family is clean another. Lady Ormthwaite, if you will trust me and ax no questions, that brazen-faced Miss Atkins, as I allus had my doubts on, though she got round me with her fair speeches and the love she shammed for the blessed baby, is a hussy, and you would do well to dismiss her this day with no notice and no character, and a month's wages, though she ain't deserving of a penny-piece, save to get her out of the way, and to keep her clip of a tongue quiet. I had my suspicions of her before, when she traped to the dairy that regular, stayed twice as long as she might have done, and sassed us all round in the

servants' 'all when we wondered what had kep' her. But I had no reason then to fault Mr. Greg with Miss Atkins's wrong-doing—that I should couple their names together!—and the thing had blowed over.”

Lady Ormthwaite sat aghast, with more cause than Ditton could conceive.

“What do you mean, Ditton?” she cried, with unwonted severity. “How can you, how dare you, give me such advice with respect to a defenceless girl? She may be silly, or—or forward and troublesome, but her character is her only possession.”

“Lady Ormthwaite, my lady,” answered Ditton, drawing herself up in self-defence, “I seed her with my own eyes a-carrying on with young Mr. Greg, and a-leadin’ of him off his feet, in the farthest south room on the third floor, where the cane furniture used to be till the snow came through the roof when we was in foreign parts and the furniture was shifted to the lower floor. She had took it upon her to kindle a fire in the grate—the little worthless—”

“Ditton!” cried Lady Ormthwaite, sharply, “I will hear no such words of any servant of mine without sufficient proof of the justice of the accusation brought against her. I will not hear them of a young girl whom I was the means of bringing into the house. It is you who take too much upon you when you make such cruel random charges.”

“Which is words I never expected to hear from no mistress of mine—least of all from you, my lady—in return for doing a dooty as is painful to me.

I've served you faithful, and loved the darling baby as you've trusted me with better than my own flesh and blood," cried poor Ditton, deeply hurt and in high dudgeon; "but if it is a question whether you'll listen to me or pass over the vile tricks of that girl as will be Mr. Greg's ruin, body and soul, why, I'll leave to-night, unless you wish me to stay until my place is filled, which I have no desire that you should suffer, nor the squire be put about, nor the dear baby mishandled. I don't mean to disparage Mrs. Pope, as is a hexcellent 'uman cow, but she ain't fit for anything else—which you will find out for yourself, my lady. And I've to tell you this, Lady Ormthwaite, my lady, I didn't jump at no conclusions, or speak before I thought; you might have knocked me down with a feather when I seed what I seed. I didn't get a wink of sleep last night, but I waited and telled Tolley to-day, for I felt as if I had a burden on my mind which I should bust if I kep' it to myself any longer, and I knew Tolley were to trussen to."

"And what of Tolley?" inquired Lady Ormthwaite, with white lips.

"Him and me watched to see as how the ongoings came about, whether from a haccidental encounter, or if the old cane-room was the rendezvous. Sure enough, there were the two again, as thick as pease, and teasin' of each other like a pair of children. When we were out of hearin', Tolley up and says to me, 'Sir Gregory is bound to be telled of this here folly. It has got to be put a stop to for all our sakes. You'll speak to the mistress and I'll

· speak to the master. And he'll have had his word with squire by this time."

"You must forgive me, Ditton, if I have vexed you by speaking unadvisedly," said Honor, with more composure, though her lips were still trembling. "I am distressed, as you can guess. Now tell me exactly what you saw."

Mrs. Ditton was propitiated, and, nothing loath, repeated her story.

Shocked as Honor was, she had retained her wits, and she was relieved to find that matters were not worse, and that she might trust giddiness and recklessness had gone no further than the bare facts of Ditton's tale implied. Honor was good and reverently pure-minded herself, therefore she was not inclined to put the blackest construction on youthful levity, not even the taste for low company, which Greg had developed. She could still hold him innocent of graver, baser errors.

As for Lydia, her ignorance, vanity, and self-will, in place of lawless passion and grosser depravity, might sum up her culpability.

Honor agreed with Mrs. Ditton and Tolley that the indiscretion must be instantly checked. "Send Miss Atkins to me," was the order; with the addition, "I know you too well, Ditton, to need to ask that not a word of this shall pass your lips to any other person than Tolley."

Ditton departed, mollified, and Lydia arrived. The girl had a strong suspicion, from Ditton's tone, quickened by Lydia's conscience, that "summat had leaked out," and that she was to be taken to

task. She must put a bold face on the situation, and she succeeded so well that when Lady Ormthwaite and her maid came face to face it was Lady Ormthwaite who was the more agitated of the two. Honor no longer invited Lydia to sit down. She left her standing, with her hand on a chair, as vulgarly smart, as childishly pretty, and as disposed to be coolly impertinent as ever.

"Lydia, I have heard something which has grieved me terribly," began Lady Ormthwaite, and stopped short to take breath and nerve herself to play the part which had fallen to her lot.

"And what may that be, my lady?" inquired Lydia, ingenuously.

"I think you can guess. I believe you know very well. You have been seen talking, laughing, and trifling with Mr. Greg Ormthwaite in a way altogether unbecoming between a servant and one of the members of the family."

Lydia looked as if she would have said, "Mayn't a cat look at a king?" but she thought better of it, and instead put on an air of injured innocence and helpless incapacity.

"And if a tale-pyete have been telling stories, Lady Ormthwaite, perhaps her or you will tell me what a poor girl is to do if a young gent, as means no harm, will speak to her and crack a joke with her?"

"Say to him that he must not, that he is forgetting himself and taking a liberty with her. But I don't suppose I need tell you how to behave yourself; your own common sense ought to do that.

You have served in a shop ; well, were you on these terms with Mr. Crowther ?”

“ I ain’t sure what terms you mean,” answered Lydia, with great apparent civility and simplicity. “ As for Crowther, he was a nasty old thing. None of us liked him, for he were a screw and a sneak. He were a married man twice over ; his eldest son by the first marriage was in the shop, and the second Mrs. Crowther came in and pertended to be a hextra shop-walker whenever she was not wanted.”

“ At least you did not have any example of imprudence set before you there. Oh, Lydia, think how it sounds—familiarity between Sir Gregory’s cousin and my maid ! Indeed, I am speaking on your account still more than on his,” she went on, very earnestly, as she flushed and clasped her hands together in the seriousness of her argument. “ You are playing with fire, my poor Lydia ; you are running into great temptation, and you are consenting to another person’s tampering in like manner with evil, which may—I had almost said must—end in grievous sin and shame for both of you.”

“ My lady, I don’t think as how you ought to speak in this ’orrid manner of me and Mr. Greg,” cried Lydia, in an angry fluster. “ Us have done no wrong, madam. If we likes to talk and laugh with each other, it ain’t nobody’s business but ours. If we care to risk the consequences you ’ints at, it is our lookout.”

“ But I can dismiss you, Lydia, and that without a character,” declared the mistress of the house, indignantly. “ I should not think myself justified in



giving any girl a character who declined to listen and submit to me on a point like this."

"Much good that would do, Lady Ormthwaite, seeing what Mr. Greg is, and him drove to believe he had cost me my situation," said Lydia, with a scornful laugh, showing a shrewder perception of character than most people would have given her credit for.

"If you think he will be so mad as to marry you," Lady Ormthwaite warned Lydia, looking her full in the face, "you are mistaken."

Lydia only tossed her head.

Then it was clear to Honor that the girl knew nothing whatever of what had taken place in a former generation, of which this scandal was a miserable travesty, else Honor could have staked her life on the rude retort, "He will be no madder than his cousin has been before him." For reasons best known to herself, Cousin Lyddy had fought shy of entering into any particulars of past family history with young Lyddy, who probably knew no more than that her mistress had been somehow connected with Lyddy Atkins, to whom the great lady acknowledged an obligation.

"In the first place," resumed Honor, speaking calmly and emphatically, "Mr. Greg is not a rich man; he is not even independent, so that he can do what he chooses. He has run through his patrimony. He has to live on the income which it is Sir Gregory's pleasure to give him, and, of course, it will be withdrawn if the young man offends and disobeys his cousin. In the second place, Lydia,

believe me, no man who intends to marry a girl will begin by playing with her, compromising both, and casting a slur on the reputation of his wife."

Still Lydia's expression hovered between flippancy and stubbornness.

Honor tried another ground of appeal—one which would have been all-powerful with herself had it ever been addressed to her, and surely some faint trace of the mother must survive in the daughter.

"Would you ruin Mr. Greg, Lydia, through his regard for you, if you care at all for him? Will you not trust that he will soon forget you and this very ill-judged connection? As for you, I hope you will live to grow older and wiser, and live to be infinitely happier with some worthy man in your own station of life—some rising young man, perhaps, like the clever young vet who cured Black Beauty, of whom you once spoke to me, and said he and his sisters had been friends of yours," Honor finished, with an effort.

Lydia's small face under her big fringe flamed furiously.

"I suppose Mr. Greg can take care of himself, as a poor girl like me is expected to look after herself. And I do not see, though you be my mistress, what call you has to twit me with Mr. Jim Rogers at this time of the day. It ain't kind, and it is conladylike. I wouldn't have no gift of Jim Rogers, I can tell him and you that—there!"

Baffled, bewildered, and smitten with misery because she had brought this fresh trouble on her

husband and on all concerned, Honor's artillery was wellnigh exhausted.

"I have been a good and patient mistress to you, Lydia," she said, again. "I cannot reproach myself on that head. At least, I have tried to serve you. Surely you owe me something—" But here the voice of the dignified and reserved woman gave way a little, and the tears, in spite of herself, stood in her eyes.

Lydia stared in utter amazement, and then she came forward a step.

"Don't take on so, madam, my lady," she urged, with real concern. "You'll do yourself harm, and there ain't no cause for it. Me and Mr. Greg has done nothing wrong. Why, if you had heard us you would have knowed that half the time we were speaking of baby, and I was blowing him up for not taking more notice of the pet."

Honor could bear no more. "You may go, Lydia. Whatever you say or do, I will not have Sir Gregory's innocent child's name dragged into your pitiful excuses," she said, sternly; and Lydia flounced out, her new-born compunction nipped in the bud.

The information laid before Sir Gregory, and his treatment of it, were much more concise and brusque.

When Tolley was receiving his master's instructions about the departure of some of the guests, Sir Gregory alluded casually and more pleasantly than had been his wont to his cousin.

"We'll keep Mr. Greg a little longer, Tolley. I don't know that he has any sport in hand to cut out

the hunting and skating we can give him. He may remain till we all go up to town."

"I would not make that arrangement, Sir Gregory, not if I were you, sir," said Tolley, abruptly and succinctly, never lifting his eyes from the barometer in the hall he had been fiddling about when the squire addressed him.

"What do you mean, Tolley?" asked Sir Gregory, sharply.

"Well, sir, I must tell you that he is getting into mischief with Lady Ormthwaite's maid, and the business wants a foot put down on it smart. I've been hanging about here half the morning to catch you and take the liberty of mentioning it to you."

"All right, Tolley," said the squire, grimly; and without further comment he stepped out on the terrace, from which the smoke of Greg's pipe was wafted through the open door.

Sir Gregory had been thinking more kindly of his young cousin lately. He had been touched by the manner in which Greg had submitted to be ousted by a mere baby—however precious to her parents—and grateful for it. Sir Gregory had felt he might have been hard on the lad, and had desired to do something—not only to make up to him for the prospects of which he had been deprived, but, if possible, raise him out of the sporting life with fourth-rate companions, into which he was sinking. But now Sir Gregory's relenting was rudely brought to an end, and his wrath was all the hotter because of the softness of heart which had preceded it.

1

He took Greg by surprise when he walked up to him and said without preamble, in accents which stuttered with passion—

“I always knew you to be a fool, Greg, but I have only just discovered you to be a blackguard.”

“Sir !” gasped Greg, totally in the dark with regard to the provocation he had given his cousin. “You have no warrant to speak to me in this fashion. I have borne a deal from you, because—well, because I have had the misfortune to be indebted to you, and I have known all along that you were disappointed in me, and detested me, though what right you had ever to expect anything which would please you from the fool you have just called me I leave you to judge. I thought when you got this bantling of yours you would let me alone. It seems not ; but I can tell you I will not submit to be called a blackguard by you or any man.”

“You have questioned my warrant to use the word,” cried Sir Gregory ; “but what do you call tampering with the virtue of a silly, ignorant girl in my service, and therefore under my protection ? The fact that she is my wife’s maid adds to your conduct the disgrace of a deliberate insult to Lady Ormthwaite.”

An insult to Lady Ormthwaite ! An attack upon the virtue of any girl ! The blood was rushing madly to Greg’s head.

“You are lying, sir,” he said, turned on his heel, and walked in the direction of his cousin’s gates.

## XVIII

"DEAR LYDIA"—wrote Greg, in rage and revolt which robbed him of what wits he had, addressing the other victim from the Ormthwaite Arms, the nearest inn—

"I have been called a blackguard, and I dare say you have been dubbed a slut, for the devil knows what. If we had been the blackguard and slut we have been reckoned, on precious small grounds, we should no doubt justify my excellent cousin's charitable estimate of us. But I think there is a better way. You're done for, anyhow; you'll be out of a place without a character; and I'll never touch another shilling of that man's beastly money as long as I live, so that I won't be able to help you—even if they did not see an infernal meaning in my help. We may as well make common cause together. I'll come back to meet you at the Ormthwaite station in time for the Parliamentary train to-morrow. We'll run up to town, go before a registrar, and sail as man and wife in the first emigrant ship I can find. I have an old college chum who will credit me with the passage money.

Yours ever, in haste,

"G. ORMTHWAITE.

"P.S.—I'm awfully sorry you've come to grief through me, my girl. Supposing you don't care to marry me, and don't fancy being an emigrant's wife, if you can point out any other plan by which I can make up, I'll do it fast. I think my cousin's wife would take my word that you were not to blame, and did nothing but answer me when I spoke to you, and tried to make some fun in the dead-alive hole.—G. O."

But Lydia had no objection either to being married or to becoming an emigrant's wife, provided the emigrant was a gentleman who could, of course, make her a lady, whose friends would never suffer him—or her, either, for that matter—to come to want. Here was one friend ready to lend Mr. Greg Ormthwaite as good as a hundred pounds on the spur of the moment. Indeed, she had great hopes that these friends of his would interpose, and that she would not need to emigrate. She had a qualm at the voyage, and at a strange country where there might be nobody but “blacks,” speaking an outlandish tongue—for Lydia's ideas on geography were decidedly hazy. In the meantime, however, what an adventure! what a “rise” out of Jim Rogers and everybody! what a surprise to mother, and to the ladies and gentlemen at Crowther's!

Lydia wrote “Yes,” she would be at the station without fail, and she contrived that the letter should go by the next post. She did not even take time to explain to Greg that she had not yet been dismissed without a character.

Snow fell during the night, but there was a chill thaw in the morning, and it was along a lane, with the road heavy and sloppy under its drab slush, that Lydia made her way to the station, half a mile distant. She was an adept at small clandestine expeditions. She had not only managed to leave the house and pass out of the lodge gates without incurring observation, she had made time to pack up her cherished belongings, and even to call at a cottage just outside the park and engage the laboring

man who dwelt there to go up to the house several hours later to claim and fetch away her luggage, and keep it for her till she sent for it. She walked as smartly as she could in the direction of the station, but no smart motion and no exhilaration at the elopement she was accomplishing could keep out the penetrating cold. As usual, she was insufficiently clad. Out of the liberal wages which had been allotted to her she had bought a large amount of trumpery finery, including a watch which would not keep time. What was of more use to her at the present moment was a feather boa ; for her serge frock, with its magenta vest, was made so as to be worn without a jacket. Her hat, a tiny toque, was perched on the top of her head, not reaching the tips of her ears, and not affording the smallest protection to her temples and cheeks, while the chief result of the white veil she flattered herself was bride-like was that it got caught on her nose and her chin, and was drawn by her breath into her mouth with a suffocating sensation. Her feet were not encased in boots and gaiters, or in the strong Oxford shoes with which a better-class girl would have been provided ; the feet were in a pair of miserably thin summer boots, a couple of sizes too small for her. They were speedily soaked, and they forced her, with her pinched, benumbed toes, to hobble as she walked. Her fingers, in flimsy silk gloves, were also benumbed, and she could not succeed in holding her skirt out of the dirt. Nothing would have induced Lydia to make even a walking-dress, if it ranked among her best frocks,



without a "bell," or an "umbrella," or some other equally inconvenient skirt, partaking of the nature of a train.

She was blue-white with cold and with the exertion of walking under the circumstances when Greg, screwing up his courage to a desperate pitch, and not without a glimmering suspicion that he was "going the whole hog," with his boots burned behind him on this occasion, met her at the country station, little frequented at that early hour.

"Why, Lydia, you ain't dressed a bit for the weather," was his matter-of-fact salutation. "You'll perish with cold and catch your death before you ever get to London." He glanced down in consternation at his ample ulster, while he was painfully conscious of the travelling-cap pulled over his ears, and the beaver gloves enveloping his hands, the comfortable wraps for a journey, which Tolley, though he had seen it his duty to denounce the evil-doer, had taken it upon him to forward to the Ormthwaite Arms, where Greg had been accustomed to stay when the manor-house was shut up.

Even in common humanity Greg would have felt inclined to strip himself of his ulster and put Lydia into it, but there were the *convenances* with which Greg had so long waged war that somehow pricked him sharply at this moment. Why should they at the very time when he felt he was kicking over the traces forever?

He did what he could for her: unstrapped his rug and folded it round her shivering shoulders, *faute de mieux*, and, in spite of her protests, he

thundered at the door of the closed refreshment-room till it was opened with a grudge; but the squire's cousin was a privileged person, and could demand admittance and extract a cup of hot coffee even at an unearthly hour. The waitress did look dubiously at Lydia, but, fortunately, the young waiting-maid was not well-known at the station, and the woman was too politely cautious to make a remark. No obligation lay upon her, as upon Ditton and Tolley, to lodge information within the next twenty-four hours.

When Lydia was a little refreshed Greg took her into the waiting-room, where he stood awkwardly before the newly lit fire, while she sat very much at home on the hard couch.

"You've been crying, Lydia!" Greg assailed her eagerly, with a change of countenance on his part. "It isn't that you ain't up to going, is it?—that you don't feel like marrying me all of a sudden, and would rather go home to your people—you have some people, a mother, or an aunt, I think you've told me—and wait a bit?"

"Oh no, sir," answered Lydia, quickly, smirking amidst the traces of tears. "I am willing to go to the world's end with a kind young gentleman like you, as will never, never fail or trick a girl; but I was that uncomfortable, and my boots pinched so with the cold and wet, and I knew my clothes were being clean ruined, while you were without more money than you will need. Then I kep' thinking I had seen the last of my ba-aby;" and Lydia broke down for a second time with a genuine wail.

"Oh, go along!" cried Greg, with rough impatience for a lad ordinarily only too easy-tempered. "You ain't going to howl for some other body's brat—a brat that has cost me the property, a some other body who has given you the sack at a minute's notice, without a hang of remorse!"

Presently he looked at his watch, and, announcing that the train was overdue, walked out on the platform as if action was a relief to him, leaving her seated in the waiting-room. Though he went to see if there were any signs of the approaching train, she felt his behavior was unloverlike, and pouted, but she was too anxious to secure the prize within her grasp to do more.

When Greg did not return in five minutes Lydia rose and bustled after him to where, among the few travellers assembled, she had no difficulty in distinguishing him walking up and down at the farther end of the platform, his hands in his pockets, fuming at the delay. When a man sees himself constrained to leap over a precipice he will wish the leap over and done with.

"I cannot understand what is keeping the beggars," he fretted. "This train used to be punctual, but it is fifteen minutes past its time."

Five minutes more, and no smoke or steam in the distance, no tinkle of a bell at hand, summoned the impatient travellers to their first goal. On the other hand, a considerable amount of perplexity and disturbance began to appear among the besieged officials.

If delay is dangerous at any time, it is particu-

larly hazardous and inopportune for a pair arrested in the early stage of an elopement.

“You had better go back and keep quiet in the waiting-room, Lydia,” said Greg. “I’ll come and fetch you whenever the train is signalled.”

Lydia was too miserably cold, out on the draughty platform, to dispute the suggestion; besides, even her shallow brain saw how undesirable it was to attract attention under present circumstances. She retired to the waiting-room, contenting herself with a single reproachful speech thrown back at Greg. “Ain’t you coming with me, sir, to bear me company? It’s hawful dull in that dismal ’ole, with nothing but texteses to read.”

Greg had hardly noticed before that Lydia’s language was not that of a gentlewoman. When he did remark it, the fact only lent a piquancy to her speech in his ears, while he was sensible that his own conversation was not always that which is heard in polite circles. Why, in the name of inconsistency, did every trip of Lydia’s tongue jar upon him that morning? He was in a rage to discover it did so. “Try and go to sleep,” he counselled her abruptly, with sound, but not very practical, advice. Then he stopped for a second as he was hurrying her along, and bought her an illustrated paper by way of consolation.

Lydia was not altogether consoled. “He ain’t very attentive, though he is a real gent,” she reflected disconsolately, as she appropriated the seat nearest the fire. “It was shabby of him to make that washy cup of coffee serve for my breakfast.

He might have ordered a hegg, or a rasher, and we'd have had lots of time to take our meal. I dare say my gentleman had deviled kidneys, or a couple of marrow bones for his share before he started for here. Jim Rogers would have seed after my comforts. He would have tret me in a different fashion. My ! what a tea he made his mother and sisters give us the day we was out at Ilford ! I'm bound to teach Mr. Greg different behavior before he is many weeks older. If I don't take care, I'll be saddled with a neglectful 'usband, always on the fly, worse than poor father was to mother."

The idea of teaching Sir Gregory's cousin manners diverted Lydia, and kept up her spirits a little longer, till Greg dashed in, flushed and excited. But, in place of whisking her away to an empty carriage, he simply came to cry :

"I say, my girl, there has been a beastly breakdown to the last up-train ; the line is blocked, and it will be hours before it can be cleared. We cannot get on. There is no trap to be had here which would take us far enough to get on the line beyond Crickton, where the accident happened. What will you do ? Stay here ? Go over to the Ormthwaite Arms at Birchington ?"—and he named the little town from which he had come that morning. He emptied his purse on the table, and shook his head ruefully. There were only the tickets for which he had paid, and several odd shillings. "If you don't like to stop here," he began, "ain't there any place near which you can think of, where you can go till I come back ?"

"Where are you going to, Mr. Greg?" she inquired with manifest suspicion, such as was calculated to render a lad of Greg's nature restive. She had a little money in her pocket, a possibility which did not occur to him, but she was not going to tell him, not even for the certainty of getting away somewhere and being married before a registrar that very day. It was a case of "penny wise and pound-foolish" with poor Lydia.

"Well," he answered, a little shamefacedly, "there is an engine and a truck or two full of navvies starting instantly to help clear away the wreckage and repair the damage. I think if I go with them I may be of some use. I'm handy enough, though I say it, at that kind of thing. I ain't any good here at present."

"You'll go and get killed there—that will be all!" snapped Lydia, with a strain of viciousness in her shrill voice.

"No great loss—no fears!" he swaggered. "But you may be precious glad that you weren't in that up-train, Lydia, for we might have gone smash with the poor sinners who were buried alive."

Lydia shuddered and cowered. She was forced to see how narrow had been their escape. One more train running along, the empty carriages in the way, the engine off the line, and she might have been lying groaning and writhing under a ton's weight of metal, or they might have dragged her out, a mutilated corpse.

"Be quick and make up your mind what you prefer to do," Greg was urging her. "I see the

signalman's flag, and there is not a minute to lose."

"I'll go back w'ere I came from," said Lydia, relapsing into resentment, under the impression at the same time that he would vehemently oppose the proposal. "I ain't forbidden the house yet as I knows of, and I sha'n't be suffered to get froze and starved, as no dog would be—there!"

"That's right," said Greg, with cheerful approval, not even aware of the cut to himself contained in the words. "I'll write, or send, or something; it will only be till to-morrow, or perhaps till this evening. Tell Tolley or Ditton I sent you back; one of them will see to you," cried the infatuated young man. "In the meantime I must do what I can to help the poor beggars; every able-bodied man is bound to lend a hand—'fellow-creatures' lives,' and all that kind of tommy-rot, you know. Never mind, though it seems a rum go to part at the starting. You're a regular brick of a good little woman not to hang on to me and seek to keep me back. There, I'm off." And Greg, who had been in many a scrimmage—warrantable and unwarrantable—who had baled out water from a sinking boat, who had swum holding up with one hand a half-drowned man, who had clambered up a fire-escape and grappled two children in the act of being suffocated in their beds, but who had never yet assisted at a railway accident, sprang into a truck with the rescuing and repairing gang, burning to be in the thick of the *mêlée*. He vanished in a trice.

His forsaken bride looked after him, more indig-

nant than disconsolate, though blank discomfiture was, perhaps, the prevailing feeling. She was not philanthropic. She had no enthusiasm to redress misfortunes and alleviate sufferings, neither was she a reader—a reader of romantic poetry represented by the “Lady of the Lake.” Lydia’s studies were confined to novelettes. She could not comfort herself by instituting a far-fetched comparison between the speeding of the Fiery Cross in Celtic warfare and the collapse in ordinary traffic of the modern monster, the locomotive, with the serpent coils of its train. She had never heard of “Norman, heir of Armandave,” or of “Tombea’s Mary;” she knew nothing of the wrenching apart of that hapless bride and bridegroom at the door of the church in which they had been wedded. If she had she would have maintained that the lady’s case was nothing to hers, Lydia’s, for she was married all right and regular, beyond dispute. No “mean chap,” were he half a dozen times Sir Gregory’s cousin, could throw Tombea’s Mary over at the last moment, and leave her in the lurch.

In the middle of her anger Lydia had still enough sense left to make her desire to get back to the manor-house before her absence should be noticed. She succeeded in her aim. The household was only stirring, and the single person she encountered was Tolley. She sought to turn aside any remark he might make on her being early abroad in inclement weather by directly hailing him, instead of slinking past him, and stopping his



mouth with a breathless announcement of the railway accident.

"I suppose a little bird told you beforehand, Miss Atkins, and you went out, right down to the station, through the mire, before breakfast, to find whether that bird were correct in his information," said Tolley, dryly, staring at his informant.

Lydia blinked, but she was equal to the occasion.

"If you will have it, Mr. Tolley, I had a parcel I was sending off, and Dick as drives the cart to the station is that careless!"

Nothing more was said of Lydia's dismissal, while her baffled flight was unsuspected. The imagination of the entire household was filled with the accident to the early up-train, the ghastly particulars of which were only transpiring. How many passengers were killed and wounded? Were there persons from the neighborhood among them? How soon would the details be known?

The first item ascertained was that the line was clear by mid-day, and Lydia was on the tiptoe of expectation, almost beyond the power of concealment, to learn if Mr. Greg had played her false, or if at any moment she was to receive private instructions what she was to do next. She was "ready packed," and could start at an instant's notice.

No note or message arrived by lunch-time, and Lydia had taken the precaution of dining once more at the second table. Sir Gregory was to drive to the station with a departing guest, whom not even a recent railway accident would stay, and

something might filter out on his return of what was doing on the line and who was at the station.

Something did not so much filter as burst on an impatient audience, and presented a new development of the situation. Sir Gregory found, on his arrival, among the injured who had been brought back to Ormthwaite station, his cousin Greg. Exerting himself like a Trojan for the extrication of an unfortunate traveller—the last to be imprisoned among the *débris*—poor Greg had been knocked down by a goods'-wagon, with the result of a bad fracture of his collar-bone. He had succumbed for a moment in the hands of one of the doctors when Sir Gregory looked down on the unconscious face, which he had last seen in the flush of passionate defiance.

In the interval Sir Gregory had talked over Tolley's warning with Lady Ormthwaite, and had not only cooled down considerably, but had come to the conclusion that his first furious attack had been, on the face of it, intemperate. Even if it had not been so he could not leave his kinsman, his heir till the other day, lying helpless in the waiting-room of the Ormthwaite station. Greg was at the juncture incapable of declining a truce. Without leave asked he was conveyed to the Ormthwaite carriage, with such suffering to his broken bone that an altercation with Sir Gregory, who had taken the precaution to abandon the patient to the care of a doctor and mount on the box beside the coachman, was rendered impossible.

Greg was thus driven back with ignominious

passiveness to the manor-house which he had vowed never to re-enter, and was presently reinstalled in the room familiar to him from boyhood. His arrival in a disabled condition awoke the utmost consternation, followed by the liveliest commiseration. The whole establishment, from the mistress of the house to the boy in the butler's pantry, was ready to wait hand and foot on the popular prodigal, who had fallen a sacrifice to his public spirit.

As for Lydia, when she heard the astounding news she had it in her mind to be seized with violent hysterics, in which she could not have helped betraying herself, and asserting her right to be pitied, attended to, and taken to Mr. Greg's room, and there installed his chief nurse. But she was not his wife yet, she bethought herself in time, while a single glance from the background, as he was borne up-stairs, at his colorless face contracted with pain, that helped her to a more vivid realization of the horrors of the disaster in which he and she might so easily have figured. It gave Lydia what she called "a turn," and kept her from simultaneous shamming.

## XIX

It was a striking instance of the supineness of Greg Ormthwaite that, even after he was wide awake to his surroundings, after he was so far recovered that he could have been removed without bodily anguish or danger to speak of, he lay in bed or sat up in an invalid chair in the house of the man to whom he had given the lie, whom he had renounced alike as a relative and a benefactor.

True, after a bad five minutes, during which his cousin had looked in on the invalid, asked how he was doing, hoped he would soon be all right, and peremptorily forbidden him to speak or move, when both men felt as if they had been making big fools of themselves, Sir Gregory announced promiscuously, with the awkwardness and confusion which pervaded the interview, that he was going up to town on business, which would detain him there for some time. True, also, that Greg was so well nursed and guarded by Hannah Ditton and a trained nurse—not to speak of Lady Ormthwaite—that he was saved all present anxiety with regard to what he was to say to Lydia when they next met. He had ascertained from Tolley that she was still in her situation, when, Greg-like, he was content to lie on his oars. He was being a duffer, no

doubt; he admitted the melancholy fact to himself, but in his present circumstances—sick and sorry, without a brass farthing to bless himself with, except what he accepted from the generosity and charity of Sir Gregory, under whose hospitable roof he, Greg, was being carefully and kindly nursed back to soundness of body—he could not, for the life of him, see what else there was left for him to do.

Greg was wellnigh driven to own to himself that he was grateful for the vigilance of Lady Ormthwaite, Ditton, and the trained nurse, who would not allow Lydia any opportunity of communicating with him. In the middle of his good-nature he was tempted to tell himself, testily, that the girl had forgotten herself. She had not kept her proper distance. She had encouraged him, and let herself come in his way as no girl, in her position, of any sense or prudence should have done. It might be dastardly to throw the blame on her, but she ought to take her share, and, by George! she had helped to get him and herself into a pretty mess. Alas! Greg was neither a Bayard nor a Don Quixote.

It was Honor who was heartily sorry for Lydia, even though her mistress was unaware of the full extent of the girl's disappointment. Honor represented the attitude towards the culprit assumed by the other servants. They were better situated to obtain a real, if vague, perception of the true state of the case than Lady Ormthwaite could be. They exhibited a little malicious satisfaction at the merited disappointment and implied disgrace of an in-

terloper. She to presume to make eyes at Mr. Greg! Serve her right if she lost her place.

Honor could not bear to see the silly little being foiled and beaten at every point, moping in her mortification. Was it a mother's pity which yearned over the victim of her own folly?

Honor could not tell; but while she was doing her best to keep Sir Gregory's cousin out of danger, she felt vexed with him for his indifference and his ready renunciation of Lydia's claims.

"Let Lydia take baby out into the park for an airing, Ditton." Lady Ormthwaite overruled the scruples of her head nurse in February, when a fitful spring sun was doing his best to counteract the east wind, with its tenacious memories of the fog-banks of Holland. "If she is well wrapped up the air will not be too keen for her. It will do her good, and send her to sleep; but I am sure it will not improve your rheumatism."

"If you please, my lady, the touch of cold don't matter to me, it don't, and it ain't too much for baby; but I cannot think as Miss Atkins is old enough, or has showed sense enough, to be trusted with baby," objected Ditton, pointedly.

"Oh, nonsense!" Her mistress dismissed the remonstrance a little indignantly. "What harm can she and baby get in the park? Lydia is very fond of the child, and will like to carry her out when you cannot take her. Lydia is not looking well. Between you and me, I think you are all rather hard upon her—a mere girl who has known no better." Then Lady Ormthwaite dismissed the

subject hastily with a renewed injunction to Ditton to see that baby wore her warmest cloak and thickest veil. "I make no question but that Lydia will take good care of her," the child's mother ended.

Even Ditton could not openly dispute her mistress's direct orders, but she did her utmost to circumvent them. She delayed the infant's toilet, over which she presided, as long as she could. She found it was time for the baby's being fed. She detected symptoms of drowsiness, and laid her down to sleep in her cot.

But Lady Ormthwaite was too much for the white-haired, rheumatic malcontent. Honor had discovered Lydia hanging about disconsolately, in the collapse of the small expedition, the mere suggestion of which had given her pleasure out of proportion to the incident. Honor was resolved that the girl should not be balked in the trifling gratification. She was suffering sufficient mortification as it was; to treat her as if she were unworthy of confidence was not a likely method of steadying and elevating her. "Besides, I believe baby ought to be early accustomed to a change of keepers," Lady Ormthwaite argued with herself, "and that nothing can be better for her than to have a younger and a livelier nurse to alternate with the older one. If so, who is more entitled to the post than poor Lydia is? and she is certainly much attached to the child."

Accordingly the moment the baby awoke from her inopportune nap she was dressed afresh, and Honor herself put her child into the arms of the

proud and important Lydia—all the prouder and more important because she had won a victory over the dragon, Ditton, who retired discomfited to the depths of the day nursery.

Lady Ormthwaite had left off arranging snow-drops in a basket of moss, and was tempted to rest in her cosy corner of a couch by the hearth. She had been wondering when Greg would make an effort to join her at afternoon tea, when a tap came to the door, and was followed closely by the entrance of Ditton, looking more portentously square and solemn than usual.

“I beg your pardon for disturbing you, my lady, or for making you anxious, but Miss Atkins have not returned with baby, and them east winds are worse for brownkitis, where babies is concerned, than for rheumatics, which you was so kind as to consider.”

Lady Ormthwaite looked at her watch, and compared it with the timepiece opposite her.

“Half-past three; they ought to be back, but the afternoon is brighter than the forenoon was. I dare say Lydia has miscalculated the time and the distance. I have no doubt she will be here presently; but send out Richard to look them up and hurry them.”

“I’ll send out Richard, and I’ll go myself with a big shawl. It ain’t so far, even to the havenue gate, where I’ll be bound Miss Atkins has gone. The cold ain’t anythink to me when it is baby as is to be thought of”—still in accents of tacit reproach.

1



"If you will, Ditton. A wilful woman must have her way, even when she has come to the years of discretion," said Honor, with a smile. She had not the slightest fear that anything was wrong. She was not a fussy woman, and she did not wish to encourage Ditton in her fussiness and in her jealousy of Lydia.

It was not till another half-hour had passed, the sun had gone down, and a frosty mist was rising, that Honor grew really annoyed and troubled on the child's account. She went and stood by a window, watching for any sign of the return of the party. There was none.

Ditton again appeared on the scene, forgetting to herald her approach by a tap, and too seriously concerned to need to be guilty of an assumption of anxiety, or to utter the conventional reminder, "My lady, I told you so."

"Me and Richard has sought down the havenue, and wherever we could think of in the park, and Richard ran on and axed in the village, but we can find Miss Atkins and baby nowheres. The darling will be perishing in this nasty fog; though I wrap her up warm, it were for daytime, not nightfall."

"I'll go myself," cried Honor, now roused to alarm; though even yet she could hardly tell what she apprehended.

"Oh no, you ain't fit, my lady," replied Ditton, looking with genuine pity on her mistress's sudden pallor, and on the trembling of the hand, put out instinctively to catch at some support. "What would Sir Gregory say to us if we let you run such

a risk? Lie down, and don't fret more than can be 'elped. Richard and me only comed in because we thought you would be worriting, anyway, about us not turning up, and we said, 'Maybe that hussy, Miss Atkins, have brought back dear baby unbeknownst to us, when we was out of sight of the house."

"Don't blame Lydia when she is not here to speak for herself," said Lady Ormthwaite, faintly. "How do you know that something has not befallen her as well as the child?"

"What could befall her, the impertinent, conceited little minx? To go off with my baby, and expose her to croup and hinflammation of the lungs!" protested Ditton, in her incredulity and impatience, disregarding her mistress's feelings on the subject of Miss Atkins, but not disregarding her mistress's welfare. "Do you keep quiet, Lady Ormthwaite, and every servant in the 'ouse will scour every corner of the park and every inch of the roads, if you will only keep quiet."

"I cannot keep quiet," said Honor, desperately. "I will put on whatever clothes you like; I will wrap myself in blankets, if you wish it, and lie back in my bath-chair; but you must bid somebody bring it out, and take me along the paths. Don't try to hinder me. It's my child, Sir Gregory's child, that is lost."

It was both of her children—God help her!—and one had been eclipsed by the other that was the child of Gregory Ormthwaite's old age. Who could tell what Lydia knew or suspected? or whether it

might not enter into her shallow brain, distempered by novelette literature, to wreak her vengeance for the miscarriage of her flirtation with Greg Ormthwaite, and the slights which were put on her, on the defenceless child ?

Before many minutes had passed, as Ditton had promised, every available member of the household was on foot and abroad in pursuit of the vanished pair. Fresh messengers were sent to the village, despatched to the nearest stations, and bidden follow the different roads.

The twilight deepened to dusk. There was a young moon, and a galaxy of stars glittered in the frosty air, but their light was inadequate to penetrate beneath the boughs of the trees and into the bracken-covered glades of the park. Every stable-lantern and coach-lamp were put into requisition. Their yellow glow fell on a figure among the searchers as unfit as Lady Ormthwaite was to encounter the air, the fatigue, and the heart-breaking disappointment of the fruitless shouting in the silence, broken only by the flutter and frightened cries of disturbed birds and by the beating of the bare bushes. The lanterns lit up by flashes the white face and scarecrow aspect of Greg Ormthwaite, risen from his sick-bed to stumble along on the arm of old Tolley in the wake of the others. He only exerted himself to speak in a high key when he was near Lady Ormthwaite, scouting the idea of danger, bidding her have no fear for the safety of the baby ; it was some trumpery accident which had detained her and her keeper, that would be explained before

anybody could say Jack Robinson. He was put out and exasperated by the subdued weeping and lamentation in which some of the women, who had strayed out and joined the main body, were fain to indulge. However, he was able to add under its cover, in a hoarse whisper meant for Honor's ears alone, "*She* would not lift up a finger against the kid, bless you! She was a rare fool about it. Don't think anything of the kind, Lady Ormthwaite."

The gray willows stirred and rustled, the "leafless ribs and iron horns" of the great gaunt trees stretched into the infinite, weirdly dark and motionless, the owls hooted, but there was no trace of Babe Marcia, whose advent had been hailed with such joy so short a time before.

Sheer exhaustion compelled the different groups to make their way back to the house before the grayness of the dawn had broadened into day. Honor shed no tear. She had ceased to offer suggestions. Her eyes were lack-lustre. She seemed neither to feel cold nor fatigue; she sat like a stone, bolt upright among the cushions in her chair, while Greg Ormthwaite would have fallen upon the threshold had he not been called back to life and its tribulation by exterior aid. Yet neither Greg nor Lady Ormthwaite was in danger of being killed outright by the ordeal through which each was passing. There is no stimulant like agonizing anxiety and the keen torture of suspense. The paralysis of horror and misery weighing on their nerves and clutching at their hearts yielded to the stimulant.

Honor raised her voice in support of Tolley's mo-

tion to summon the police and communicate more methodically with the nearest railway-stations, so that the station-masters might telegraph far and near. But the first telegram, Lady Ormthwaite said emphatically, must be to London, to summon—she did not say “Sir Gregory,” or “my husband,” but —“the father of the child.”

Greg’s idea was not put in words before Honor ; it was expressed briefly to the servants who could help him to carry it out. The natural danger, which had occurred first to everybody, was that Lydia must have somehow lost her way. She must have found herself in a sylvan labyrinth, when, scared by the darkness, overcome by weariness, hunger, and cold, and the dread of the blame she had incurred from being so long past the time appointed, she must have sat down to rest with the child in her arms. Rest was often fatal in such circumstances. She must have dropped asleep, with the probability that both she and the child had perished. But this apprehension was dismissed when no perambulation of the park could bring to view two stiffening bodies lying huddled together on a frozen bank.

Greg’s vision was of a different kind. He had recalled, with a sickening heart-throb, the one point of peril in the park. It was the small pond on the way to the old dairy. Greg had fished for minnows there when he was a boy, and it was near it he had been in the habit of meeting Lydia Atkins. The frost had not been sufficiently keen to freeze the pond into firm ice ; Greg could tell that from his daily study of the barometer. Lydia knew her way

in that direction, but if she had taken the path at random, in the course of the afternoon, and loitered in her walk, the sun might have gone down earlier than she expected, while she would feel afraid of returning in the deepening dusk. He remembered her horror of the frogs, and her calling herself "a timid little thing," dependent on pavement and gas-lamps. In such a case she might have taken refuge in the old dairy, which was close at hand. It was again given up as a dairy, but for that very reason the door stood unlocked, while the shelter of four walls and a roof was decidedly preferable on a February night to turf, crisp with hoar-frost beneath the feet, and, overhead, trees, beautiful but ghastly, with the white garniture clothing every twig and replacing the summer foliage. If, on the other hand, Lydia had been mad enough to go straight to the pond with set purpose, then—Heaven have mercy upon her!—she was not likely to leave it for the old dairy, or any other earthly goal.

Greg got two of the under-gardeners, and made them bring a net with them. The morning air revived him somewhat, and he was able to walk the distance. He did not feel the pain in his shoulder, which had been tormenting him for weeks. His sole consciousness was the iron compulsion to solve the problem, so far as the spot of which he alone knew the significance was concerned. He tried the dairy first. The door was on the latch, as he had supposed, but the dust on the floor and on the empty shelves had not been disturbed for months

—not since the milk-basins, butter-moulds, and cheese-presses had been removed to their latest quarters. There was not the slightest evidence of any person having been there recently.

Greg turned towards the pool. There was a thin coating of ice at the edge of the pond, but the middle presented a considerable surface of water, dark against the silvery whiteness which surrounded it.

Greg knew its depth; in fact, he had been immersed in it up to the shoulders, as a half-grown lad, when its inches had not been equal to drowning him. But even less depth would be called for to drown a slight young girl encumbered with a baby. The ice had been trodden on, and broken in more than one part of the edge; but he had enough coolness left not to make too much of that, for he knew it was the playground of the boys from the village, who were allowed to slide there when the ice would bear them, and he had no doubt they came to try its strength on every possible opportunity. He directed his assistants to remove the outer ice-flakes and use the drag-net, as they were accustomed to do in late summer and autumn, for the clearing away of the accumulation of dead leaves, rotten twigs, and water-weeds, which threatened to render the pond stagnant and unwholesome.

The leader of the party tramped up and down in his weakness, unable to stand still, his hands thrust into the pockets of his ulster, setting his teeth, and controlling a shiver every time the net was drawn up. But no heavy, limp body impeded the action

of the men, no dripping robes of a drowned infant helped them to fish out the little corpse. No rag of poor girlish finery, no morsel of dainty lace, not the feather boa, on which Lydia set store, not the cambric handkerchief which Honor had hastily unfolded and added to the baby's equipment. Nothing was brought to light save a rusty kettle, which in its better days had been used at some picnic, and afterwards filled with stones and fastened to the carcase of an unfortunate puppy.

Greg laughed aloud, with a quaver in his laughter, when he distinguished the nature of the spoil. Happily, the dragging of the pond was found as fruitless as was the search in other places, in disclosing the secrets of the last twenty-four hours.

Greg could go, as he was determined, to meet Sir Gregory at the station, look with guiltless eyes into the other's troubled eyes, and find whether his cousin held him innocent of the calamity which had befallen the house of Ormthwaite. For Greg was the next heir to Ormthwaite, and in the event of the baby's having been murdered, or spirited away whence she could never more be heard of, a tremendous burden, with its brand of presumptive evidence, would crush Greg to the end of his days.

Sir Gregory alighted from his railway carriage looking old and worn but still master of himself, as a man who has encountered the blasts of fortune for threescore years is bound to be. He must have stood amazed and aghast at the telegram from his wife—"Baby is lost. Come at once." The lost baby was the light of his eyes, after Honor, his long-



looked-for, late-granted, only child. But he could contain himself, he could think of the child's poor mother, he could ask his cousin, with hardly an anticipation of good news from Greg's downcast face, in tones which did not falter, "Is the child found? What has happened?"

Gregory Ormthwaite's was a noble and dignified figure of a man, though his eyes were piteous with unshed tears as he walked firmly along the platform to his dog-cart, his white head rising above the heads of the little gathering of people already acquainted with the strange misfortune which had befallen the old squire, and making way for him with silent and respectful sympathy. He plied Greg with questions, but he did not utter a word of upbraiding, not even a curse on Lydia, and there was no damning accusation in his righteous eyes. He had been scantily kind, even scantily just, to his cousin on various occasions, but the magnitude of Sir Gregory's misfortune made him absolutely fair to his kinsman under the grievous charge which might hang over him thenceforth. The bereaved father even stopped short in the inquiries jostling each other on his lips to say, in a friendly voice, "You're all right now, Greg, ain't you? That you should look ill goes without saying in our present trouble."

Then Greg was aware the speaker knew, as certainly as he was conscious of his own existence, that he, Greg, would not have harmed a hair of the head of his supplanter. For the first time in their lives the two men understood each other and were at amity.

## XX

HONOR sat awaiting her husband in the room she had chosen for herself, the room both knew well.

“My dear, my dear, what you must have suffered!” He hailed her with outstretched arms of pity. “But it will all be cleared up now that I am here. It is not to be thought of; it is without parallel that a girl and a child should be lost, even in one of the largest towns in England, not to say in a quiet country-place like this. The girl will be tracked, and, please God, the child rescued.” He would have taken her in his arms, but she slipped from his grasp.

“Sit down there, Gregory.” She pointed to his chair, placed ready for him before a table, on which there was a tray with meat, bread, and wine. “I know you have not swallowed a morsel to-day; you must take food now, to help you to bear what you have to hear.”

He looked into her dilated eyes and drawn face, and hastily broke bread and poured out wine while his heart stood still in his breast.

“Has anything further being heard since Greg started for the station?” he forced himself to say, while the sweat-drops gathered on his forehead. “Has the wretched girl laid violent hands—” He

could not finish his sentence. His wife was calm in comparison with him.

"No," she said, "I know nothing of the lamb, only that if God has taken her it is well with her, and she is everlastingly safe in His fold. It is of the girl I wish to speak. You may call her wretched—the wretched daughter of a wretched mother!" She clasped her hands and wrung them—she, who was ordinarily so quiet and restrained in her gestures.

He stared at her in dismay, for he could only leap to the conclusion that grief had disordered his wife's brain.

"I am not out of my wits, Gregory." She answered his look. "I could wish I were. Lydia Atkins is my child, my elder child. Her real name is Clay. She is Job Clay's daughter—the baby I bore to my first husband when I was little better than a child myself, years before I saw your face."

"But that child died in infancy, before we ever met. You forget, Honor; your mind is confused, as it well may be by this calamity." He sought to remonstrate with her gently and soothingly. He was still under the impression that her reason was temporarily overthrown, and it struck him, with a flash of compassionate comprehension, that, under the circumstances, it was not wonderful her dementia had taken this deplorable form.

"I thought she had died. As I am a sinful woman, trusting in the Saviour's grace, I believed she had died—you will believe me, Gregory?—when I

told you so before you married me. But my cousin Lyddy lied to me—she was always a liar—and a couple of years after our marriage she came here, and in this very room confessed the fraud she had practised, because she wished at the time to adopt the child, and have her all to herself, and because she reckoned it would be a piece of good-nature to rid me of the baby without my knowing it.”

He could not doubt the circumstantial details. He believed her now, and rose up, facing her, to judge and condemn her, his eyes blazing with wrath, his whole face working with uncontrollable emotion.

“Do you mean to say, Honor Ormthwaite,” he demanded, fiercely, “that all these years, very nearly from the time we were man and wife, you knew this secret and kept it hidden from me, while I was trusting you, heart and soul?”

She hung her stately head and wrung her hands again.

“I thought to spare you the disgrace of the connection. I thought matters might remain as they were—I knew you would not suffer them to do so if you knew—and that they might never affect you. The knowledge I possessed has eaten like a canker into my heart and spoiled my life.”

“It might well do so; the retribution was merited. You abandoned your helpless child to a woman worse than yourself, and you deceived and betrayed—not in one moment of culpable weakness, but by a prolonged course of deliberate deceit and treachery—the man who loved you better than

himself, who had raised you from your humble condition to place you by his side, who held nothing in this world or the next too good for you. Woman, how could you dream that any person or thing belonging to you could prosper while you were guilty of this wickedness?"

"It is all true," she admitted, despairingly, "and I have always foreseen the time when even you, Gregory, my husband, my first love and my last, would turn against me, when in your honor and integrity you would only hate and despise me the more because the sin was committed for your dear sake. Yet when I would have gone away and borne my punishment, I could not; though I think I could be almost content to go now, because the concealment which has been so terrible, so cruel, is forever at an end. If I could bear the punishment alone! But how can I endure your sharing it—you who have done no wrong, you who are an upright English gentleman, as honest and stainless as the day? If you ever cared for me, Gregory Ormthwaite—and I know, ah! I know how you have cared—if you have one spark of regard left for me, don't double the penalty to yourself by bidding justice have its due. Say to me, or do to me, what you will. I am rich through your generosity. I will resign every penny, and go away and work for my bread as I worked before you crossed my path. But spare the girl Lydia; don't call down on my head the curse of having doomed her to a miserable end. I thought to soften her fate, to guard her from evil, to make some small atonement—poor

fool that I was !—and I have simply accomplished her destruction if she is alive this day, and if the innocent, who was given to us for a space, has been reclaimed, to grow up in God's paradise. For her sake, for your little baby's sake, Gregory, shield her sister as far as you can. Lydia loved the child—she did indeed, Gregory ; it was quite pretty to see the girl's ways with the baby. If Lydia had been so left to herself as to do the infant harm, or to hide her where she cannot be found, the girl herself must have been driven into a frenzy. Think of it ! The poor, silly young thing, slighted, taunted, and forsaken."

He stood sullen and stern. It was not Lydia's guilt ; it was not even the loss of his child, with the sudden extinction of all his sweet hopes. What was that loss to the loss of his wife—the woman he had loved and trusted above every human creature for a quarter of a century ?

Then the noise of a horse's feet coming up the avenue at full speed, and of wheels crushing the gravel before the house, penetrated even the din of the storm in these two hearts, and smote upon ears which had been deaf to all outward sounds for the last grievous five minutes. Mingled with the beat of the horse's feet and the ring of the wheels was a sudden confused clamor of voices.

Involuntarily the eyes of both husband and wife turned to the long French windows opening on the lawn, and commanding the carriage-drive to the front door. At that moment there drove up before it, with a dexterous sweep and an instantaneous

stop, the best thing in high-stepping fillies, and the last new fashion in spick-and-span dog-carts. And in the dog-cart, the picture of respectability, neat and natty as ever, sat Mr. Jim Rogers, the rising vet, and beside him Lydia Atkins in a flutter of excitement, holding up to view the uninjured baby, the heiress of Ormthwaite.

## XXI

SIR GREGORY flung up the window nearest him, and, in spite of his threescore years, sprang out, leaving his wife to grope her way like one struck with sudden blindness, and to stand clutching by the framework.

"It is baby, my lady," cried Lydia's shrill, triumphant voice, as she recognized Lady Ormthwaite, "and the pretty dear ain't a bit the worse, let Mrs. Ditton say what she pleases!"

Jim Rogers leaped out and walked straight up to Sir Gregory.

"I have brought back Miss Atkins and the baby, sir," he said, touching his hat, and speaking as coolly as if he had been selected to give the pair an airing. "I understand from Miss Atkins that she was tempted to commit an imprudence which resulted in a misadventure, but I am happy to say the child is no worse for it. Of course, Miss Atkins is sorry; but if you have anything further to say on the subject I must beg you to say it to me, since she has promised to be my wife; and if you object to have her here for a single day I am ready to drive her back to where she came from."

"After I've packed my things, Jim, surely." The unabashed Lydia made the amendment, beaming



blushingly on all around, even on Greg, with his back to a wall in the background, looking admiringly at Rogers and sheepishly at Lydia.

In place of answering Jim Rogers, or taking possession of his child, Sir Gregory merely signed to Ditton to receive the baby. He then handed out Lydia, and motioned to her to step into her mistress's room by the open French window.

Jim Rogers might have demurred, for he was not the man who would submit to have his explanations and suggestions treated with silent contempt; Lydia might have objected, though, like most women of her class and type, she stood much more in awe of a master than of a mistress, and she entertained as much respect as it was in her to feel for Sir Gregory—the handsome, elderly gentleman with his easy air of command, who had never spoken to her save in a few words of courteous greeting. But both Jim and Lydia were taken by surprise, and they were also instinctively affected by the unconscious despotism, at a critical moment, of a member of a class which had ruled for many generations.

Lydia—a little crestfallen and staggered in her confidence that it was all right now that she was back, and that Jim Rogers, with whom she had made up her quarrel, was there to speak for her—was ushered into Lady Ormthwaite's presence by Sir Gregory. He followed on the girl's steps, closing the window behind her, and taking up his position opposite his wife.

Lydia did not wait to be dismissed on the spot as an introduction to her being threatened with

the police and assailed with cutting reprimands and reproaches. She took the initiative with her customary volubility; but it was volubility tempered on this occasion with sobs and tears.

“I did not mean no harm, my lady; no, I didn’t, Sir Gregory. I would not have hurt dear baby—not for the crown of Britain. I just thought as how I might stroll to a side gate which opened on the ’igh-road—for it was lonesome and getting dark under the shade of them big trees in the park—and who should I see in a trap houtside the gate but mother, as had come all the way in the train from Burntwood to Wyburgh station, and then had driven over to get a peep at me. She did not say why her had not come straight here and stopped the night, as I am sure no lady and gentleman, as was ladies and gentlemen, would have forbidden, but mother always was a one to do things in round-about ways. Besides, she ain’t so strong as she was, and though it ain’t pretty of me to mention it, there’s no denying her ’ave got into a bad ’abit of taking a drop too much, and then, you bet, she don’t rightly know what she would be at. She would not consent to come up to the ’ouse, and, indeed, my lady, I would not have wished her to be seen as she was, though she had dozed off the worst effects of what she had took. After she seed me promiscuous like, and got my news, she would have me and baby take a ride with her along the road, promising faithful to bring us back in no time. Her were not in a state to be crossed, though she had a deal to say and was real bright.

Her and me got to talking of what were happening in Burntwood and at Crowther's, and how all the ladies and gentlemen there were going on, until we had ridden a deal farther on the road than I had meant to, and it were getting dark."

"Oh, Lydia, and I trusted you!" cried Honor at last, with a moan. "Did you not think of our anxiety?"

"Well, I was rare and frightened then, Lady Ormthwaite, but mother only laughed, as her would laugh at what she counted a lark; but she bade her driver turn and go back fast to the gate. Then, as ill luck would 'ave it, we drove round the corner on a gypsy-cart, and went crash into it."

"Serve you right!" growled Sir Gregory, with more savageness in the growl than Honor had ever heard from his lips.

Lydia shrank a little, but she was able to resume her story.

"I hollered with all my might, for I thought I were killed outright, but none of us was bowled over, not even the gypsies. All the 'arm as was done was that one of our w'eels had flown off and our 'arness was broke in bits. Mother's driver said as how he couldn't move till his w'eel were screwed on again and his 'arness mended; and he got one of the gypsy men to run off and fetch the nearest w'eelwright and see if he couldn't borry 'arness. But what were I and the pretty dear to do? Mother would have had us wait till the w'eel were screwed on and the 'arness replaced. But if we waited, we must have drove over with her first to Wyburgh

before coming back to the 'ouse here, else mother would have lost the last train to Burntwood ; and even if we did we must have put up there, for the driver he took his Bible oath that his 'oss weren't fit to travel the road twice over. So I up and 'eld my baby tight and close, and started to walk 'ome, though my 'eart came into my mouth at the gathering fog and darkness. But baby were all right, for Ditton had put on her quilted cloak, and I 'ad my boar, and I twisted it round and round her blessed little neck, till it were the thickest part of her body.

"The driver said there were a short cut, if I looked out sharp for a lane with posteses right-hand side. I looked out, as far as I could see, and I thought I spotted posteses ; but either he were mistaken or I took the wrong turning, since I walked, and I better walked, and I could not tell where I was in the dark, only that I hadn't come to no park-gate or park-wall. The road got slipperier and the hair colder, and I did not need the stars a-coming out over my 'ead to tell me how late it was getting. I thought to myself, as I hadn't been killed outright by the haccident to mother's trap, I were to be punished in another way. I were to be robbed and murdered, only my purse was in my box at the 'ouse, and without it it might not be worth the w'ile of the gentlemen of the road—not the commercial gents as we used to make fun with at Crowther's, but right down 'ighway robbers—to murder a little thing like me, not to speak of my baby. Eh ! but she wanted her supper and her cot, and her began to cry, and wouldn't be

pacified, though I dandled her all I could and 'eld her underneath my jacket: I cried too, for company, I were that miserable; and I believe I must have sat down, and been found mummified in the morning— Don't shudder, -my lady. I did not sit down, I kep' on a bit longer, till I came on a 'ouse by the road-side, with a woman standing at the door peering out under the hand as she held over her eyes for the children her had sent on a herrand to a near neighbor's."

"No thanks to you for help at hand," Sir Gregory growled again, but the growl was gentler.

"She challenged me what I was doing there, with a hinfant in arms out at that hour."

"God bless her!" Honor broke in, with quivering voice. "God forever bless the woman who took pity on my baby!"

"When I told her whose it was," went on Lydia, "she cried, 'Lord a me'sy, miss, Squire Ormthwaite's bairn! Do you want to be took up and tried for murder, or sent to Woking or Milbank for life?' Her said I were miles out of the way, and her man were gone seeking for work, and her foot had been burned bad, which it were with the upset of a kettle a week before, so that to hop to the door were the utmost she could do. None of her children knew the road, save to school and to the neighbor, as was a bed-rid old thing. But she would take us in and keep us the night, for to stay out and struggle on longer would be the death of my baby, even if I held out. She fed baby, which was that glad of the warm milk her bit the spoon with

her gums, and fell asleep with it in her mouth—the pretty dear! She took her children and slept with them in their clothes, under a rug on the floor, and gave me and baby her bed. It was quite clean, I do assure you, Lady Ormthwaite, though 'ard as a stone. She gave us breakfast, and started us on the road, but Lord! I was that stiff and tired I thought I never should have got here, and I dare say I mightn't, but I had good fortune this time, for I came right on Mr. Jim Rogers, driving his fine nag and trap. He was a hold acquaintance, I may say now a hold flame of mine, and when he saw me a-toiling and moiling along the rough country road, and that low I were crying again, he pulled up. First he asked me what ailed me, and what I was doing there with a child? He looked so black when he put the question that I was next to frightened out of my wits. But when I told him it was Sir Gregory and Lady Ormthwaite's child and how we had got lost the night before, he were quite the gentleman, and could not do enough for me and baby. He offered us a lift 'ome, and then—well, then I was so 'appy and my 'eart was that full I told him everything—I was not a bit afraid. So we made it up, and he is to take me straight to his father and mother, for he says he won't forgive mother for the trick her played me, decoying me away and leaving me in the lurch. And there is to be no standing up before a registrar where Jim and me is concerned." Lydia gave a toss of her head incomprehensible to her auditors. "We means to drive to church proper, and

I think I'll have his sister Liza and Florry Parkes, as was my particular friend at Crowther's, for my best maids."

Neither Sir Gregory nor Lady Ormthwaite disputed the wisdom of the arrangement. Sir Gregory heard the speaker out with impatience; Honor was spent with agitation, and hardly able to follow the latter part of Lydia's story, so as to apprehend what it tended to.

"We'll see to that presently," said Sir Gregory, shortly. "You have done what was wrong, and caused everybody the greatest distress and inconvenience; that cannot be denied. It was not from any merit on your part that this escapade did not cost a heavy price, and did not fill you, when you knew all, with remorse. But I am not going to be your judge, for you have suffered greater wrong during a period of years than any pain you inflicted for a single night. You have come here to serve as your mistress the woman who was bound to own you; who *shall* own you as her daughter."

"But I ain't her daughter!" screamed Lydia, with widely opened, saucer eyes.

## XXII

"I AIN'T Lady Ormthwaite's daughter—how could I be?" insisted Lydia—"any more than I'm the real daughter of mother at Burntwood; for my true name ain't 'Lydia Atkins,' but 'Lydia Clay.'"

"Yes," assented Gregory, with gloomy conviction, "the daughter of Job Clay, of Hayes."

"No, Sir Gregory, of Will Clay, Uncle Job's brother Will, as left Hayes and went with his wife and family to Birdcup, twelve miles from Burntwood, two years before he died. His wife, my own mother, were dead already, and me and my brother Ted and my sister Milly, we was took and put into the Union. You won't mention it, sir, for there are folk as would be so oonkind as to cast it in our teeth, and it might do a hinjury to Mr. Jim Rogers, as is a rising young man."

"Stop, girl! What had you to do with Mrs. Atkins? How did you come to be with her at Burntwood?" demanded Sir Gregory, speaking with judicial severity in his bewilderment and in the springing up of a hope to which he dared not at once give credence; while Honor sat up, drawing long, sobbing breaths, and pressing her hands against her breast.

"Well, Sir Gregory, I ain't sure as I've all the



rights of it," confessed Lydia, with an air of puzzled perplexity rather than of hardened duplicity. "Mother—that is, my 'dopted mother, Mrs. Atkins—though she's frank enough when she likes, and appears all frankness to folks as ain't well acquaint with her, is that close at times on her own affairs, you wouldn't think. But she couldn't take me in altogether, her couldn't, and her didn't try it on, for I were going of 'leven when she came to the Union at Birdcup and 'said she wanted a child to 'dopt, and were there children of one Will Clay in the 'ouse, for she would prefer one of them, since she knew some of their people. There was Ted, as was wild when he grew up, and 'listed to be a soldier, and there was Milly, as is doing well in a gentleman's laundry, and me. She said she wanted a little gal, so the choice lay between Milly and me, and she took me instead of Milly, for her vowed I was a rightdown Clay, and her taking me is entered in the Birdcup 'ouse books.

"But when we got to Burntwood she bade me never let on as I was not a Atkins; and when you, my lady, offered me your place as waiting-maid under Mrs. Ditton, mother—I call her as I've learned to—dared me to 'int to you as I was not Lydia Atkins, or as I had ever been in a hunion. Her said it would be as much as my place were worth, for you would never suffer a gal as had been that low when she was a child that she was took from charity out of a 'ouse, to wait upon you, as was Sir Gregory Ormthwaite's lady. She told me that you and her were relations—forgive me, my lady, if

it ain't so—I know mother did tell woppers when it suited her—and you had once laid yourself under a hobligation to her, and gave her a 'lowance in consideration of it and the relationship. Her would not be able to do anything to 'elp me if I offended you by chattering about my young days—as if I were likely to cook my own goose!—or about a brother and sister of mine. If I 'eld my tongue you would ax no questions to signify, and it would be all right, and you, my lady, would be kindness itself, which I cannot say you 'ave not been. Though as to 'loading me with presents,' which mother reckoned on also, well, Lady Ormthwaite, maybe you thought as how my salary, of which I make no complaint, was enough," ended Lydia, with sly emphasis. She appeared totally oblivious of the quantity of warm, suitable clothing, and the useful gifts she had shown herself inclined to scorn, which Lady Ormthwaite had lavished on her.

"Can you prove the truth of this statement of yours, with regard to your having been taken at the age of ten or eleven years from the workhouse of Birdcup, where you were known as the daughter of a man named William Clay, and were in company with another girl and a boy identified as his children?" Sir Gregory held tenaciously to the main point at issue.

"Lord, yes, Sir Gregory," answered Lydia, without a second's hesitation. "We are all in the 'ouse's books, and so are father's and mother's names. I hear regular from my sister Milly, as wouldn't be my sister if us weren't both of us Will

Clay's daughters. The last time her wrote her said as how she had come across the matron of the house at a Methody meeting, the matron and Milly being both Methodies. The old lady were 'ale and 'earty, and inquiring kindly for me, which I must beg of her to leave off doing, for it ain't just polite, seeing it ain't what you might call an honor to have been under her care," protested Lydia, pettishly.

The conversation was interrupted by a knock at the door, and a message delivered by Tolley without a muscle of his face moving. "Mr. Jim Rogers wished to let Miss Atkins know he could not wait longer, if he was to take her over to his father's that night."

Nobody attempted to detain Lydia from a departure which would be a sensible relief. She went with positive *éclat*. She did not even stop to claim what wages were due to her; they had to be forced upon her in her elation. She had already expressed her penitence for her fault. She had no more to say now than to cry with a simper, "You 'ear what he says. I have to wish you a very good morning, my lady, and you too, Sir Gregory." Yet she turned on the threshold with a wistful entreaty. "You will let me kiss good-bye to my baby, to my pretty dear? I know Mrs. Ditton is mad with me, and hates me like pisen, and Jim can't abide being kept waiting; but I don't care, I'll risk it if I have your leave."

Sir Gregory nodded hastily.

"Oh yes," sighed Honor, faintly.

The husband and wife were alone again. They stood and sat where Lydia had left them. They

looked into each other's faces. A mountain load had been lifted from their minds and consciences. What was to be said and done now ? It was one of the gravest crises in their history. Their future peace or discord, happiness or wretchedness, hung in the balance, and it seemed as if the lightest look or word would give the finishing touch to the scales either way. Withal, there was always something about poor Lydia which introduced an element of farce into the most tragical or pathetic passages in life with which she had to do. A sense of the ridiculous was present with both of the Ormthwaites. The faintest ghost of a smile stole into their down-cast eyes, and lurked about the drooping corners of their mouths.

But presently Sir Gregory held his gray head high, and turned on his heel without speaking. Honor knew, as clearly as if he had said the words, that her sin of renouncing what she had believed to be a sacred obligation, and the wrong of keeping back what she had accepted as the truth, from the man who had trusted her implicitly, were in his eyes as grievous errors as if Cousin Lyddy's fraud had been a hapless fact, while the painful penalty remained to be paid. It did not lessen the moral guilt and degradation that an indemnity had been proclaimed. Her whole life for months and years, when she had seemed the most honest of women, had been an acted lie.

Lady Ormthwaite was sitting alone in the nursery at Ormthwaite, with her half-undressed baby on

her knee. She had sent Ditton down to the servants' hall to enjoy her supper, while Honor herself performed the offices which every true mother—be she queen or peasant—would fain render with her own hands to her child. Honor's treasure was restored to her. True, her sin had found her out, and was estranging her husband, but she was relieved from the heaviest, most intolerable part of her burden, the load of deceit and concealment born of deceit. At this moment she could only kiss and clasp her little one and be happy over her with the unspeakable happiness and thanksgiving which fill the heart after an irreparable loss has been averted.

Bending thus over her child in the warm glow of the hearth and the softened light of the shaded lamp, with anxiety and shame, sorrow and pain for the moment forgotten, all Honor's vanished youth and womanly beauty seemed to come back in a flash. She sat softly cooing to the contented, winking, blinking morsel, stretching out its toes and indulging in baby leaps in her lap.

Honor Ormthwaite was the loveliest and tenderest, and, but for the sore temptation yielded to for the sake of another, truest of women. So thought Gregory Ormthwaite as he watched her, with his child in her arms, from the open doorway.

When he came in she paled and shrank, and mutely offered him the baby.

"No, keep her," he said, gently, putting the child quietly back. "Poor Honor, how you have been punished!"

"Yes," she said, simply, "I have been punished, but not more than I deserved. I brought it all on myself. If I had not hidden the story from you then you would have searched into Cousin Lyddy's falsehood, and it would have been detected at once. I might have been saved—oh, what might I not have been saved! The burden of a miserable secret, which embittered the beautiful years and nearly cost me my life, the anguish of deceiving you, the false step of bringing Lydia here by way of a poor atonement, with the wretched complications that might have ensued—everything might have been spared me if I had been courageous and upright, as you believed me."

"It was a great mistake, a grievous error," he said, gravely; "but it is over, and so is my hardness. To think I could have been hard to you, Honor, my wife, my own love, in your humiliation and misery! But it made me mad to think that you, of all women, should have so erred, and so been humbled."

"I have been justly humbled," she said, sadly.

"It is past," he told her again. "It will soon be forgotten."

She shook her head. "Never."

"For my sake and our child's," he pleaded for her against herself—"for my sake you sinned, and for my sake you will cast your sin, as God Almighty casts the sins we have forsaken and repented of, behind our backs forever."

On a later occasion Honor spoke wistfully to her husband in the old, happy confidence re-established between them—

"I have so accustomed myself to feel responsible for the girl Lydia that I cannot in a moment shake off the responsibility. Besides, if I had not unwittingly roused Cousin Lyddy's cupidity, Lydia might have been left in the despised Union with her brother and sister ; she might have escaped an evil example, and I cannot tell what temptation. I feel that I owe her reparation still. Is that rising young man, that very smart vet, a desirable partner for her ? Will he be kind to her ?"

"My dear, you may give her the finest marriage present you can think of. After all, she is your niece by marriage, and you need not despair of seeing her the wife of a professor—a professor in a veterinary college ; for Mr. Jim Rogers is a very clever and gifted fellow, and the education he has given himself does him immense credit. The fact is, he is a great deal too good for the little girl. I could not resist hinting as much to him ; and what do you think he answered ?"

"What ?" echoed Honor.

"Something which was quite true—that it was his business, and not mine. Then he owned that she was not very wise, but she was a good girl, he said, and cared for him as he cared for her, which was enough. He could manage her ; she would be all right with him. It was perfectly true in every respect. By the managing I have no doubt he meant that he would be the master, and could look after her, and bring out the best which was in her. What more would you have ? It is the finest chance for her—so good a chance with a man of

the stuff of which I am convinced Mr. Jim Rogers is made, that it could hardly have been looked for where she is in question, and she is a lucky girl to get it. Don't you think so?"

Honor acquiesced.

"And as for him, a wife whom he could not master, who might look down on him and his antecedents, who did not care for him any more than he cared for her, would not suit Mr. Jim Rogers's book, I suspect."

Presently the conversation diverged to Black Beauty, whom Sir Gregory pronounced as sound as a bell at that moment, and, as if by natural sequence, to Greg. Sir Gregory had heard of a ranch, not far from Cyril Daintrey's, which would suit Greg admirably. Greg himself was delighted with what he had been told of its big game and its livestock. Hester Daintrey would mother Greg as well as her son. The negotiation for the purchase was to be entered upon immediately.

THE END







BY RICHARD HARDING DAVIS

---

**THREE GRINGOS IN VENEZUELA AND CENTRAL AMERICA.**  
Illustrated. Post 8vo, Cloth, \$1 50.

Mr. Davis is an indefatigable traveller and a delightful raconteur. . . . His books upon European travel are as good as any of modern times, and this new volume about a country which is now prominent is very interesting.—*Observer*, N. Y.

**ABOUT PARIS.** Illustrated. Post 8vo, Cloth, \$1 25.

A book of sketches, graceful and interesting, recommended by the freshness and vivacity of their view and manner.—*N. Y. Sun*.

**THE PRINCESS ALINE.** Illustrated. Post 8vo, Cloth, \$1 25.

The style is charming, and there is a delicate and romantic treatment which runs throughout the narrative.—*Churchman*, N. Y.

**THE EXILES, AND OTHER STORIES.** Illustrated. Post 8vo, Cloth, \$1 50.

These varying but uniformly characteristic tales show the travelled man, they show the observing man, and they show the natural and well-trained story-teller.—*Interior*, Chicago.

**OUR ENGLISH COUSINS.** Ill'd. Post 8vo, Cloth, \$1 25.

Admirable examples of genuine observation recorded with the light and quick, yet firm, clear touch of a literary artist.—*Philadelphia Times*.

**THE RULERS OF THE MEDITERRANEAN.** Illustrated. Post 8vo, Cloth, \$1 25.

Mr. Davis has combined history, geography, and romance in such a way as to leave no dull or stupid line or passage in his book.—*San Francisco Chronicle*.

**THE WEST FROM A CAR-WINDOW.** Illustrated. Post 8vo, Cloth, \$1 25.


The United States soldier commissioned and enlisted, and the American Indian alike, have cause to be grateful for the fate that drew them into the line of vision of such a delineator.—*Nation*, N. Y.

**VAN BIBBER, AND OTHERS.** Illustrated. Post 8vo, Cloth, \$1 00; Paper, 60 cents.

Short stories so full of life and significance that they often seem to tell us more of the social conditions they describe, within ten or twelve pages, than our own novelists can compress into a volume.—*Spectator*, London.

---

**PUBLISHED BY HARPER & BROTHERS, NEW YORK**

 For sale by all booksellers, or will be mailed by the publishers, postage prepaid, on receipt of the price.

## SIR WALTER BESANT'S WORKS.

BEYOND THE DREAMS OF AVARICE. Illustrated. 12mo, Cloth, \$1 50.

ALL IN A GARDEN FAIR. 4to, Paper, 20 cents.

ARMOREL OF LYONESSE. Illustrated. 12mo, Cloth, \$1 25; 8vo, Paper, 50 cents.

DOROTHY FORSTER. 4to, Paper, 20 cents.

ALL SORTS AND CONDITIONS OF MEN. Illustrated. 12mo, Cloth, \$1 25; 8vo, Paper, 50 cents.

LIFE OF COLIGNY. 16mo, Cloth, 30 cents.

CHILDREN OF GIBBEON. 12mo, Cloth, \$1 25; 8vo, Paper, 50 cents.

FIFTY YEARS AGO. Illustrated. 8vo, Cloth, \$2 50.

HERR PAULUS. 8vo, Paper, 35 cents.

FOR FAITH AND FREEDOM. Illustrated. 12mo, Cloth, \$1 25; 8vo, Paper, 50 cents.

KATHERINE REGINA. 4to, Paper, 15 cents.

SELF OR BEARER. 4to, Paper, 15 cents.

LONDON. Illustrated. 8vo, Cloth, Ornamental, \$3 00.

ST. KATHARINE'S BY THE TOWER. Illustrated. 12mo, Cloth, \$1 25; Paper, 50 cents.

THE BELL OF ST. PAUL'S. 8vo, Paper, 35 cents.

THE HOLY ROSE. 4to, Paper, 20 cents.

THE IVORY GATE. 12mo, Cloth, \$1 25.

THE REBEL QUEEN. Illustrated. 12mo, Cloth, \$1 50.

THE WORLD WENT VERY WELL THEN. Illustrated. 12mo, Cloth, \$1 25; 4to, Paper, 25 cents.


THE INNER HOUSE. 8vo, Paper, 30 cents.

TO CALL HER MINE. Illustrated. 4to, Paper, 20 cents.

UNCLE JACK AND OTHER STORIES. 12mo, Paper, 25 cents.

---

PUBLISHED BY HARPER & BROTHERS, NEW YORK.

 The above works are for sale by all booksellers, or will be sent by the publishers, postage prepaid, to any part of the United States, Canada, or Mexico, on receipt of the price.





1



NOV 25 1949



the 1990s, the number of people in the world who are undernourished has increased from 250 million to 800 million (FAO 1996).

There are a number of reasons why the world's population is becoming more undernourished. First, the world's population is growing rapidly. The world population is projected to increase from 5.5 billion in 1990 to 8 billion in 2025 (United Nations 1994). Second, the world's population is becoming more urbanized. The world's population is projected to increase from 25% in 1990 to 55% in 2025 (United Nations 1994). Third, the world's population is becoming more dependent on food imports. The world's population is projected to increase from 10% in 1990 to 35% in 2025 (United Nations 1994).

There are a number of reasons why the world's population is becoming more dependent on food imports. First, the world's population is becoming more dependent on food imports. The world's population is projected to increase from 10% in 1990 to 35% in 2025 (United Nations 1994). Second, the world's population is becoming more dependent on food imports. The world's population is projected to increase from 10% in 1990 to 35% in 2025 (United Nations 1994).

There are a number of reasons why the world's population is becoming more dependent on food imports. First, the world's population is becoming more dependent on food imports. The world's population is projected to increase from 10% in 1990 to 35% in 2025 (United Nations 1994). Second, the world's population is becoming more dependent on food imports. The world's population is projected to increase from 10% in 1990 to 35% in 2025 (United Nations 1994).

There are a number of reasons why the world's population is becoming more dependent on food imports. First, the world's population is becoming more dependent on food imports. The world's population is projected to increase from 10% in 1990 to 35% in 2025 (United Nations 1994). Second, the world's population is becoming more dependent on food imports. The world's population is projected to increase from 10% in 1990 to 35% in 2025 (United Nations 1994).

There are a number of reasons why the world's population is becoming more dependent on food imports. First, the world's population is becoming more dependent on food imports. The world's population is projected to increase from 10% in 1990 to 35% in 2025 (United Nations 1994). Second, the world's population is becoming more dependent on food imports. The world's population is projected to increase from 10% in 1990 to 35% in 2025 (United Nations 1994).

There are a number of reasons why the world's population is becoming more dependent on food imports. First, the world's population is becoming more dependent on food imports. The world's population is projected to increase from 10% in 1990 to 35% in 2025 (United Nations 1994). Second, the world's population is becoming more dependent on food imports. The world's population is projected to increase from 10% in 1990 to 35% in 2025 (United Nations 1994).

There are a number of reasons why the world's population is becoming more dependent on food imports. First, the world's population is becoming more dependent on food imports. The world's population is projected to increase from 10% in 1990 to 35% in 2025 (United Nations 1994).